

Ayutthaya

"Out on the Hobo Tour"

Emil



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"Out on the Hobo Tour"



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“Out on the Hobo Tour”

“Coo Coo Ca-Choo Mr. Emil, Sir!”

“And here’s to you, Mr. Emil (Sir)” is a common refrain amongst our crack, young marketing team here @ WWWG this morning after I let them review this newest creation by Mr. Emil (also now referred to as the “Hermit of Penang” instead of “That old Kook!”). Why were they so excited and several came running into my corner office excitingly misquoting old SG (can’t use the names without paying a royalty to the publishers but can freely quote the lyrics under Singapore Trade Laws – Go figure?) song lyrics?

That was the scary part of the conversation and it would take too long to explain here but, needless to say; they were extremely happy that Emil had actually produced kind of...sort of...a more traditional book that they could easily promote and market with Ms. Kimmie (our in-house Legal Beagle) holding their hand throughout the whole marketing process.

They were happy!
If they are happy...
Then, I make money!

SEINE

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Glad you could all gather (hope you are social distancing as you read this...) "None too close there, Campers!" and were able to join us as I feared you might be delayed as I know how difficult that Plague Virus Transit visas and documentation are to get these days.

As you know, the world and it's sensibilities are drastically changed and seem destined to change even more as we turn the page and enter

"Plague Year – Part Two."

One of the greatest, yet, most unnoticed change has been in our ability to talk straight little-a-lone "speak to truth" because of all the sensibility, PC WOKE nonsense that has gone from the hurt feeling of some former high school/college nerds (Remember "Revenge of the Nerds" part 1-3?) to being official government policy.

"Words count!" that is what they say and so I started counting the number of words that I was using...just in case...in case, they come try to audit me...maybe, there will be a quota or maybe they are thinking of rationing words...a word shortage – who would have ever figured? OK! Now I get it!!!

WWWG's Legal Beagle (Ms. Kimmie) schooled me into what this really means and according to her reasoning

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I need to zip my mouth and never say another thing – at least not write it down or posting online as she claims that would be enough to put me away for a long time. While I tried to nicely explain that I am already there and was gaining the moral high ground until she added “...And deport you back to Hong Kong!” and with that barely out of her mouth; I dully shut up.

Seems that in this brave new age at the Dawn of the Great Social Reset, my social credit score stands at negative 10,000.

Negative?

10,000???

I didn’t even ask and took her word on that.

Now, I am torn and since I already crossed the Wordage Rubicon back about 10,000 points ago; should I not just keep speaking my unofficially confirmed/approved version(s) of the truths that I always so rudely speak or do I just start mumbling to myself in the park (Ms. Kimmie says this may be illegal too) and throw my trusty old Panasonic Laptop out into the sea?

What does this have to do with Ayutthaya nothing but, everything that I write is subject to punishment if some junior clerk in some faceless ministry decides that they didn’t like what I said or even the way I say it.

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We live in an age where a tourist wrote a bad review of a non-governmental, retail operation that was posted on an international gossip board; he was promptly arrested and threatened with real jail time unless he retracted his complaint after paying a big processing fine to the government types that arrested him.

So much for your “Yelp” Reviews, Bubba!

While this is all new to most of you, I have been the poster child of all this for over two-years now.

Regular readers will know that I was deported from my beloved city of Seoul because some political hack in their Ministry of Information (they call it the Ministry of Truth) took offence that I was offering up politico advise to the Don on sending Dennis Rodman to be our first Ambassador to North Korea and to a program to “McDonaldify” the North...but, they were most offended by my reference to the North’s Leader as the “Jolly Little Fat Man.”

Mind ya, that this is South Korea and he is suppose to be like the South’s greatest enemy...seems, that they can say it but if I do...I get kicked out of the country as a racist and am black listed until that clerk I offended retires or dies (I do on a monthly basis call to enquire as to his health).

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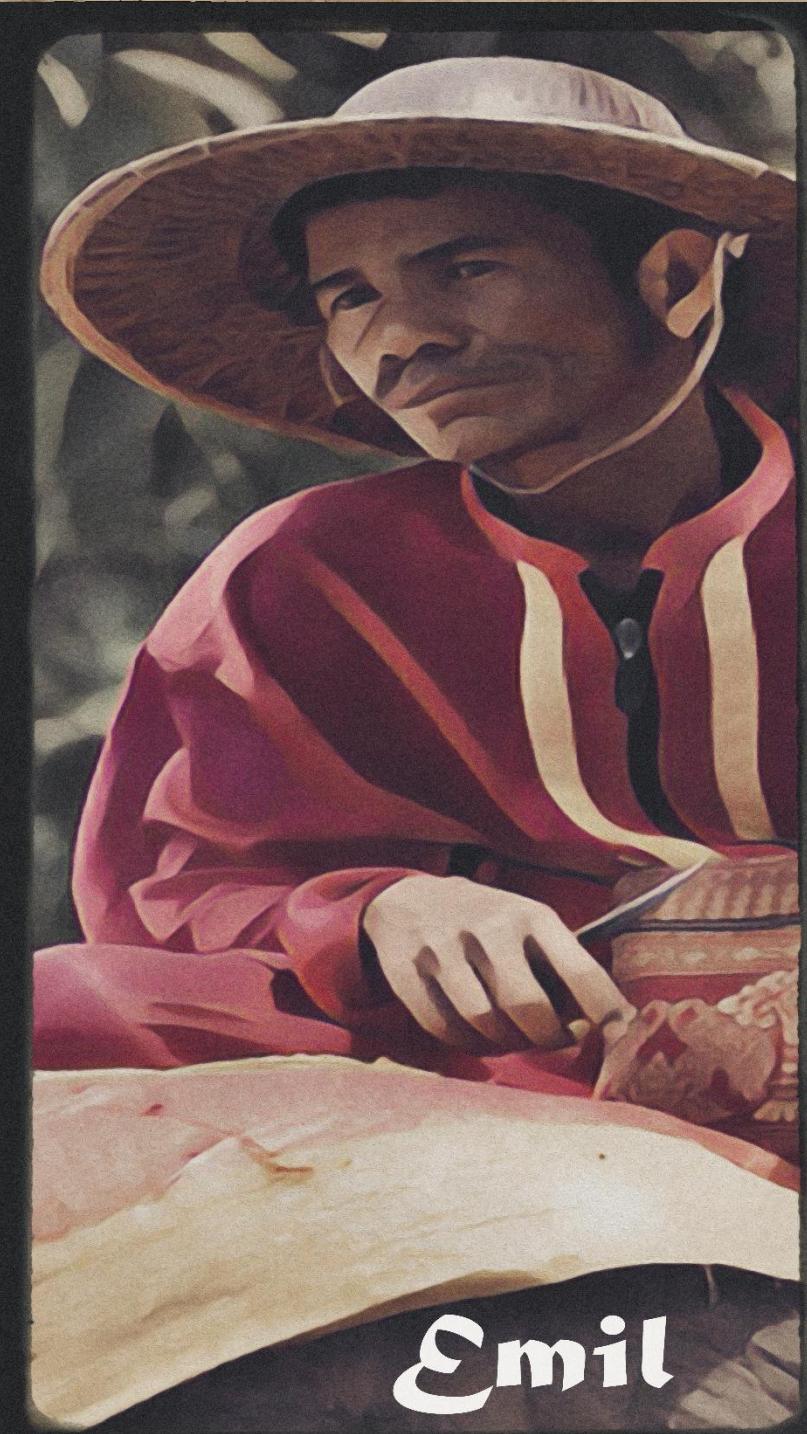
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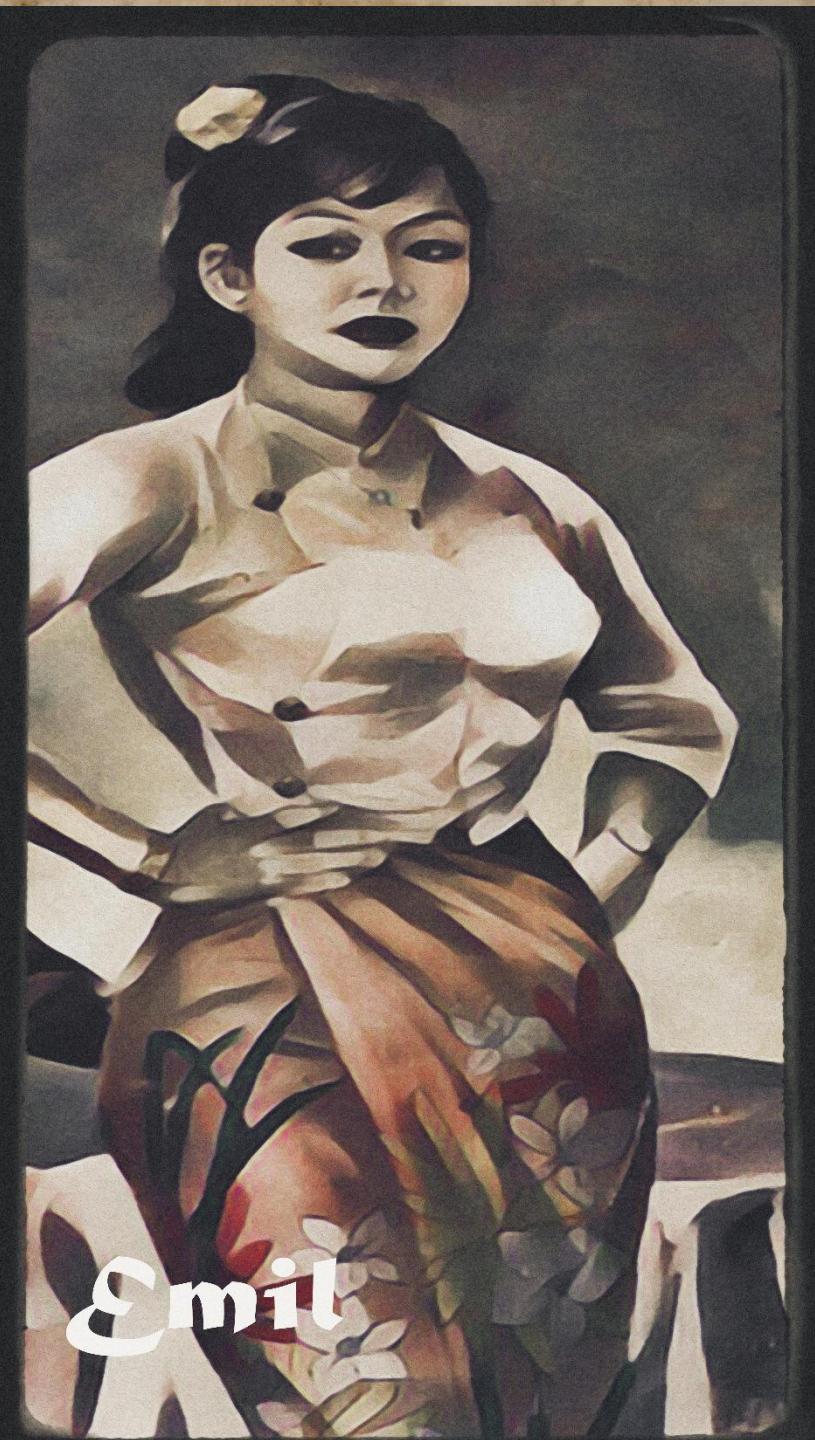
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NOT A TOURIST SCHOOL MASTER...SORRY!

The old man was sitting under a rare shade tree seeming content to just let the world move on pass him and he seemed to haven't had the slightest interest in talking to me although his granddaughter was very anxiously to sell all of us “Foreign Devils” enough souvenirs to call it a day before the long heat of the day drove all the tourists back to their air conditioned bus.

I asked about the old man and after some hesitation, she explained this was her grandfather and that he had once been an extremely important professor at the local university and was an expert in the history of this once greatest city in the South of Asia...it is often recording in the historical journals that over 1 million people lived in this grand city before the Burmese arrived with a notion of dismantling the city brick-by-brick and carting it all back to Burma proper.

A Professor?

“Yes!” she said and then bragging proudly upon the old man as he had been a leader of many archology studies in the region while he was a Professor of History and at one point, she explained that he had been some kind of minor official in the local government but, his title was somehow lost in translation.

“If we get our friends here to buy your souvenirs, would he talk with us about the city?”

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Puzzled by my offer but, not wanting to pass up on the generosity of the offer; she sat with her grandfather as they talked at some length – I assume about our offer but, his constant stare over to us made fell feel less sure that a deal could be struck.

As I said, after a considerable conversation, she rejoined us and said that her grandfather wasn't the type of man to offer foolish foreigners a free education into matters that he knew that the schooling would be lost on us.

Then she said “But, if your friends did buy enough of our genuine relics (all made locally NOT in China like the other surrounding stands) he might offer you a few movements of conversation...” (I think that is a reasonable translation)

Drawing upon the “Huckster” blood that so freely in my veins and my friend's willing cooperation; we herded all of our bus's tourists back to her stand where it was an artistic performance of salesmanship that I dare say would revival the best of the “Home Shopping Network.” Within mere minutes, her stand's “genuine relics” disappeared in to the backpacks and over-sized purses of our new tourist friends.

Look I don't feel bad as I approached this as a mission of history and anyway, her prices were not unreasonable,

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they were locally made as she had said and it all went to support a local, small business woman who was at a disadvantage to the corporate (Chinese owned) stands that lined the remaining pathway down to the Wat (Thai word for temple).

While, as to his word, our conversation was short, it did reveal that he was (indeed) a very educated man of letters and he was an expert in not only the area's history but, a very skilled story teller on top of that.

The story he selected to share involved the lesser known history around the founding of the city that predated its official founder, King Ramathibodi and went on to wet our interest in how that city has deep ties to a magical kingdom from Thailand's national epic, the Ramakien which brings the date(s) of the actual founding back to ancient biblical times or before...maybe back to 600 BC (in our calendar)?

This was indeed worth the effort and this 10 minutes of conversation translated by his granddaughter (her English was very good for being self-taught) was enough for both of us to request more time to come back, visit with the professor and learn more.

She shook her head in a universal expression of “NO” as she kindly explained that “We do appreciate the

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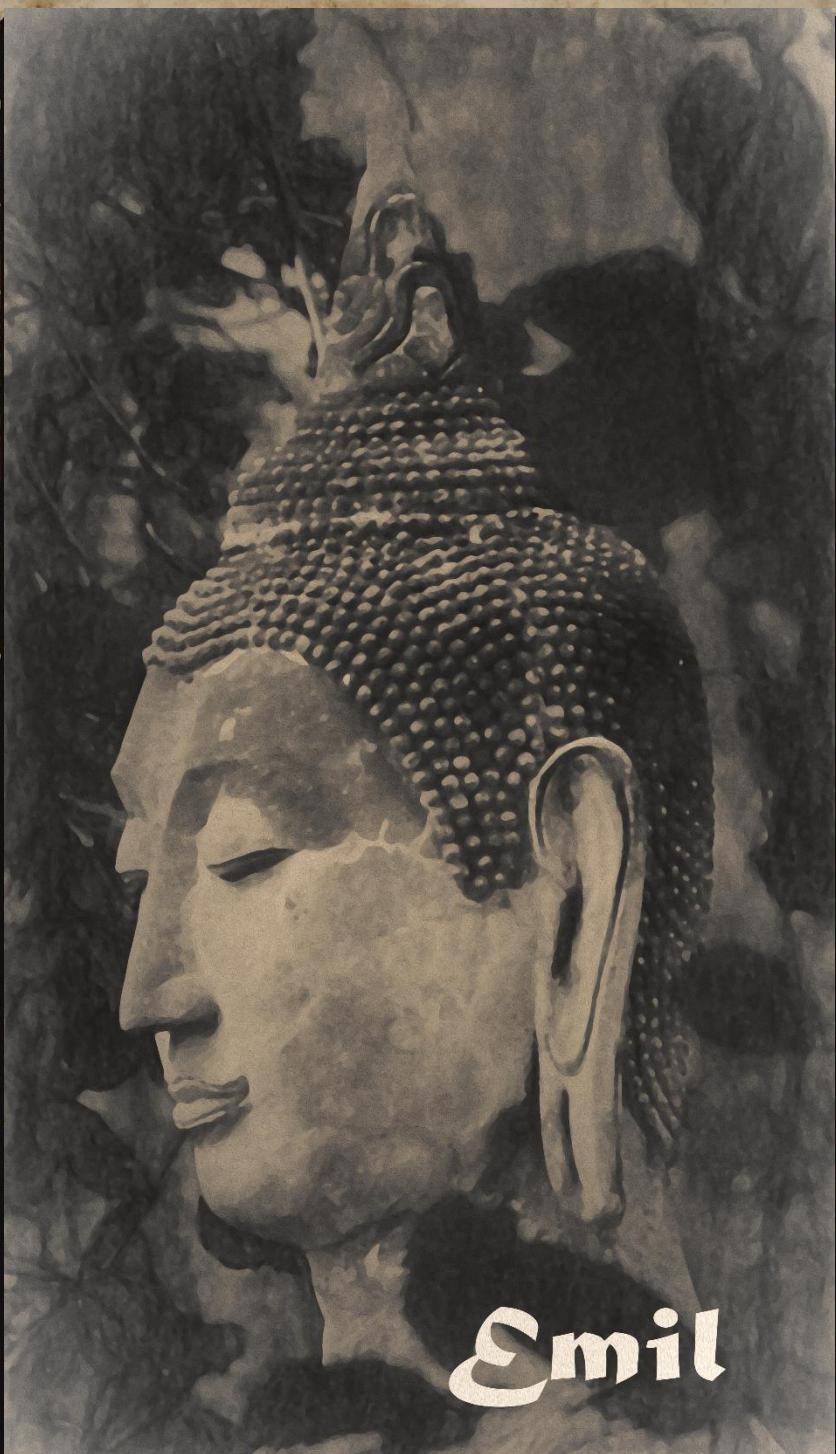
NOT A TOURIST SCHOOL MASTER...SORRY!

kindness of you and your friend but...my Grand Father is not that type of man and he has no longer any interest in being a tourist school master...SORRY!"

Well back to our tour group as they were blaring the bus's horn as they were already late for their next stop..."GIFT SHOPS!"

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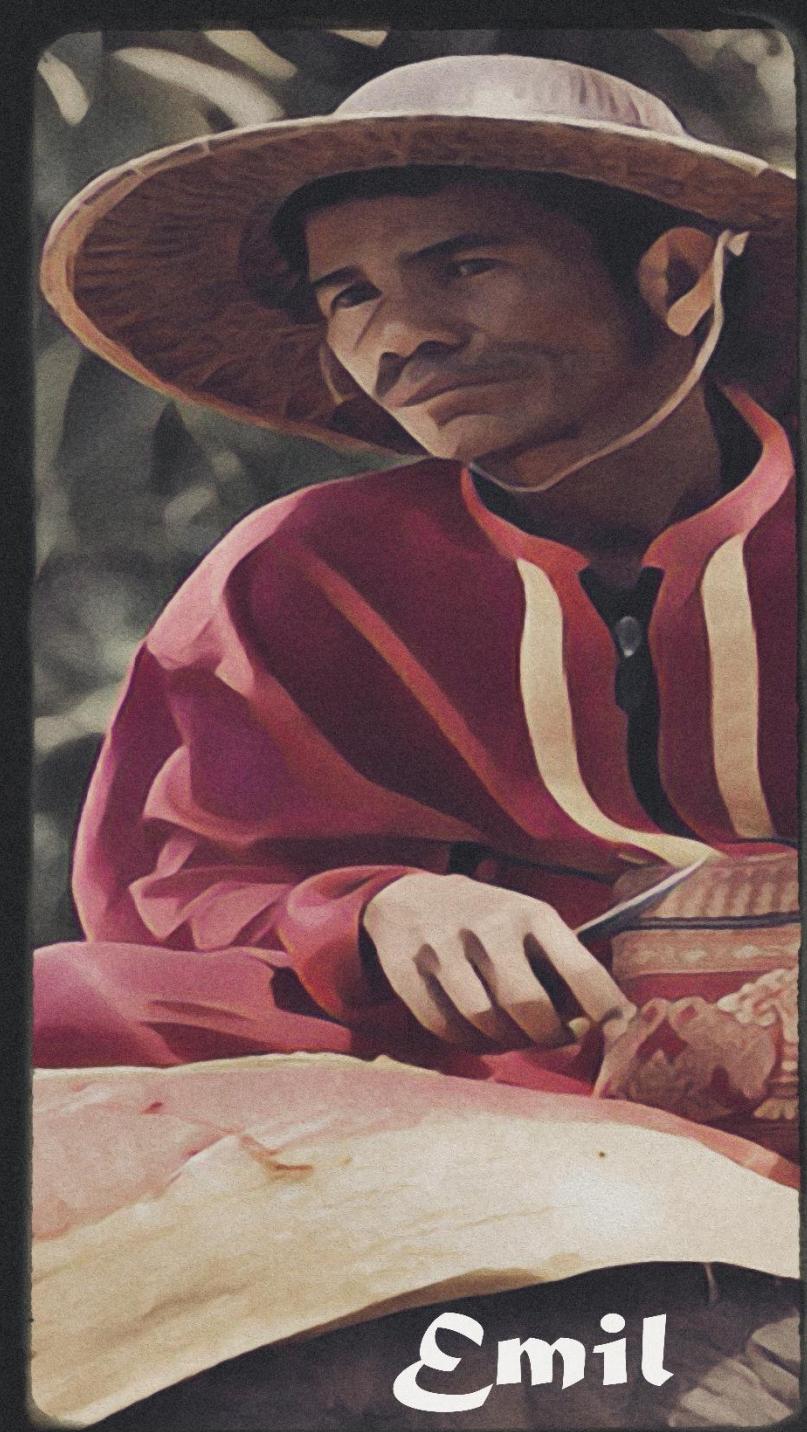
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WALKING LIKE AN AYUTTHAYA NOBLE MAN

No one in Ayutthaya could have ever dreamed that an unknown television series premiering on Thailand's (Media Elder) Channel 3 would within it first broadcast hour set the dye for a national, cultural revival and bring the city back from the brink of becoming a rustic, “touristy” designation to being the most “In” and whack place to be as a cry went up, nationwide:

“BE THERE OR BE SQUARE!”

“Love Destiny” was an instant rating success and then turned into a real life time portal back to a semi-mystical time of beautiful maidens, noble families and legendary warriors that in a time of national drift, the entire nation became obsessed with everything Ayutthaya.

The smitten audience was not merely happy to follow along with the characters in each new instalment but, in vast numbers, young people began to dress as the series' characters with even some fans beginning to emulate what became known as “Ayutthaya” Speak” (mixing of Ayutthaya language into every day conversations).

Within weeks, this obsession was everywhere and if you weren't dressed in elegant period costumes (with reason of Thai Modesty as the real “Ayutthaya” fashions did incorporate a large use of topless or near topless

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clothing design which haven’t been carried over to modern times) and if your conversation wasn’t properly laced with “Ayutthaya Speak;” you were almost designated as a cultural outcast and most certainly would not have a seat at the cool kids lunch table.

As days passed this phenomenon grabbed even a wider swatch of the nation as it spread from youngsters to their older brothers/sisters and then to their aging “aunties” and even dad started to drop a word or two of “Ayutthaya Speak” into his business conversations, at the office.

This trend knew no economic bounds as even the poorest tuk-tuk driver could afford to incorporate “Ayutthaya” fashions into their otherwise normal dress.

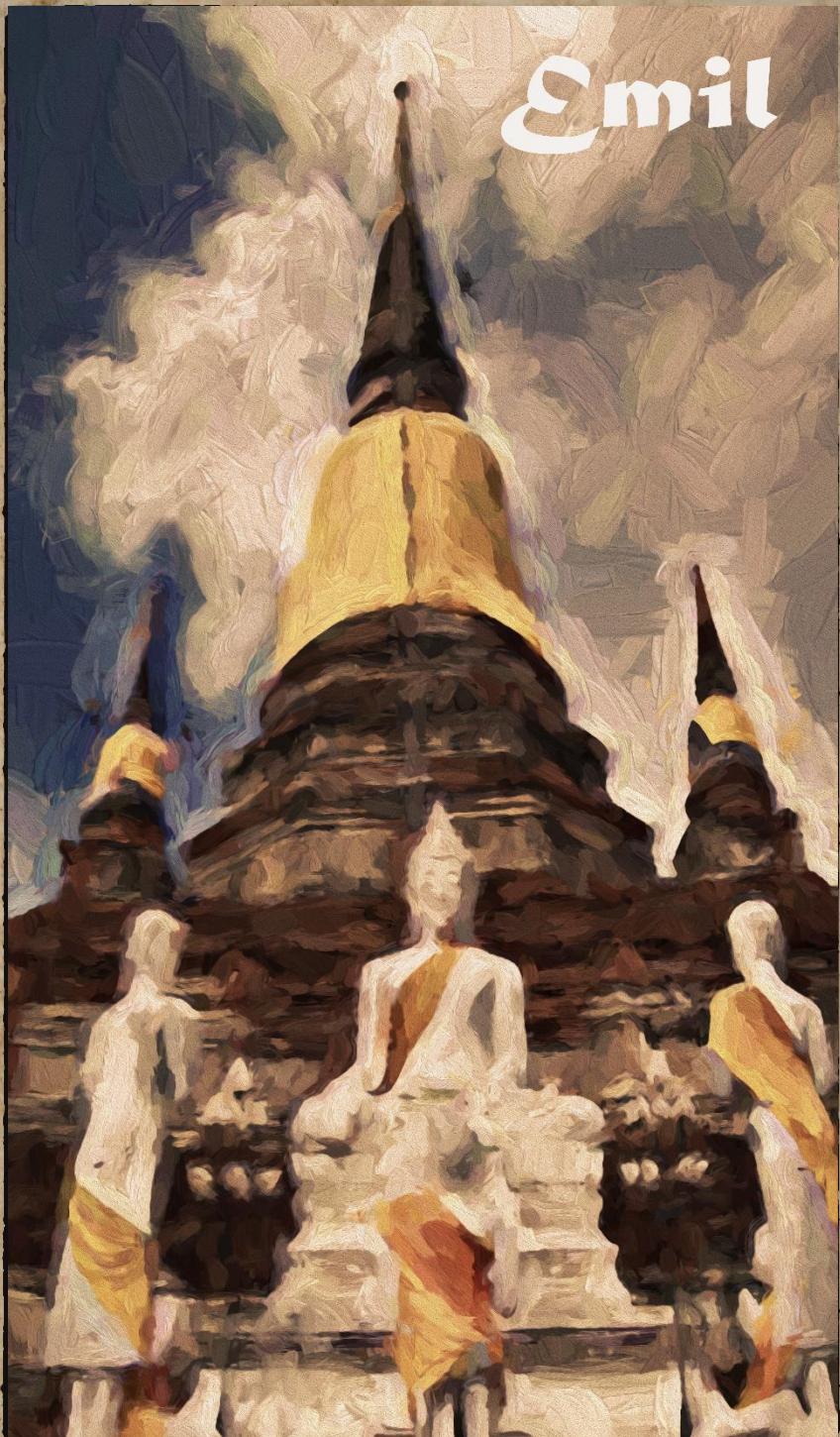
This had spun out-of-control but, to the economically hurting folks of Ayutthaya this was a gift from God and they were having to deal with (first by the hundreds then by the thousands) the true fans who increasingly began flocking to their rusty, little town to dress in elegant period costumes and pose for pictures among the ruined temples and palaces of Ayutthaya Historical Park.

This was a near instant gold rush for local merchants, there were a rash of new businesses that opened to meet the grown demands for places to eat, things to buy

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and even a place to stay for all the people who went from the standard three-hour tour to a three-day adventure.

Seamstress shops had trouble getting enough fabrics to make the tradition costumes that the new costume rental stores needed with ever increasing demands.

Seemed that everyone's older uncle was in demand as elder storytellers and/or tour guides of the city's numerous ruins to what seemed to be an entire nation hungry for even more stories and grand tales from this mystical, dreamlike time of national purpose and identity.

The city was swamped and local officials pleaded for additional funds to help them with the logistics to the fact, that without warning or even a friendly call that they were coming; seems that a large part of the nation had showed up on their doorsteps.

In the end, it worked itself out and now, several years gone past; it has faded with the events of virus plagues, that fact that every TV Network spent well over a year filling the airwaves with copycat programs which waned the public's interest and Ayutthaya has retreated from its 15 minutes of new found fame.

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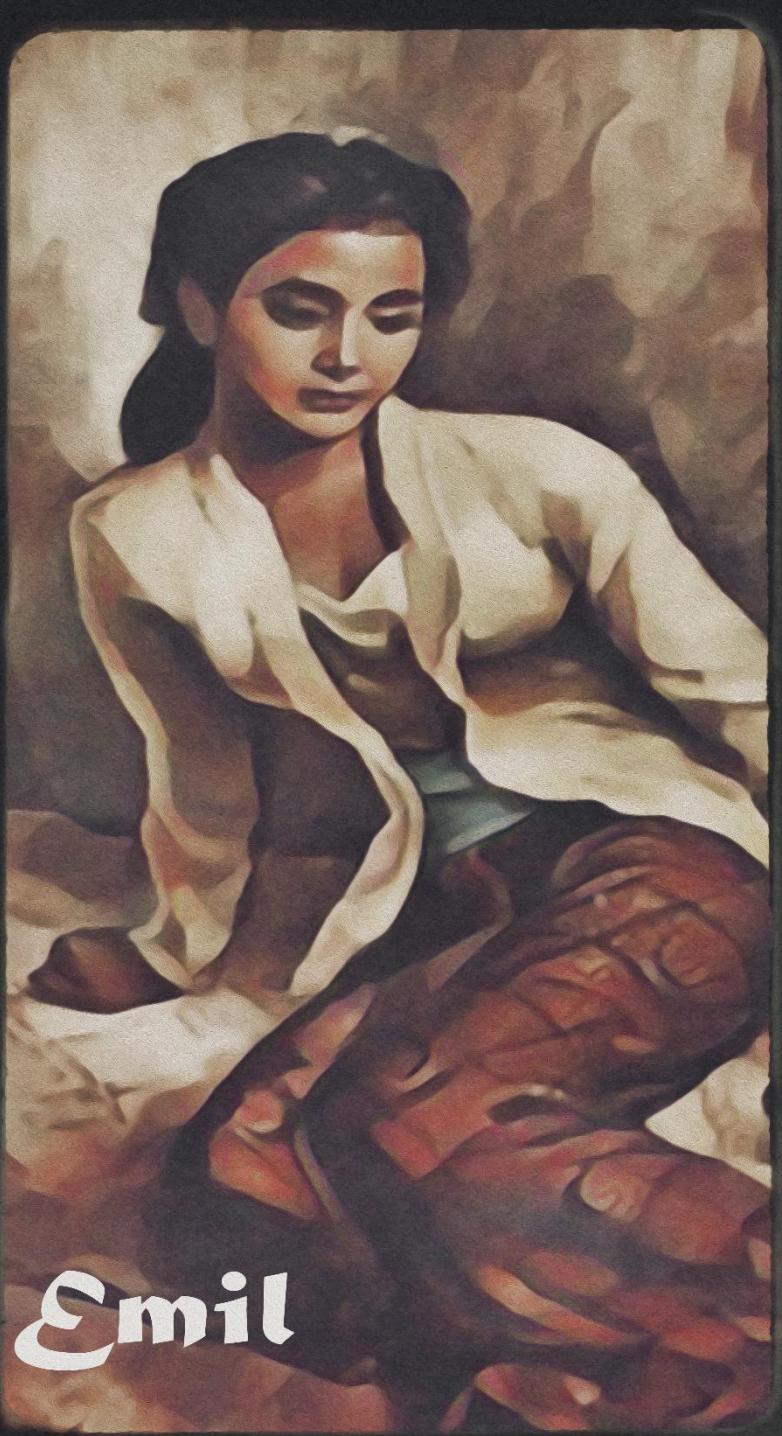
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Most locals have accepted this fact as it was bound to never last but, everyone you meet still has a treasure chest of mostly funny stories that all seem to start with

"You remember when..."

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GETTING THERE AND ABOUT

As I was about to start this project, I decided to see what was hoovering about in the ether of the Internet and I was rather surprised by a lot of personal opinion represented a fact – in one case, they claimed that his INTEL came from God but, as far as I can determine, God wasn’t available to confirm this claim nor has (to my knowledge) Archangel Michael made himself available for a statement in this matter

Despite this recent internet conflict over if one could claim God endorsement; there is a lot of stuff being presented by people (who if you met at the bus stop) you would (most certainly) never freely elect to trusting them with planning, booking your upcoming vacation or in taking travel notes from them.

If you have ever been there without the safety net and security of the normal and expensive three-hour tour then you will quickly see that anyone telling you that it is easy to walk or get a bicycle and see “everything” would be rather humorous were it not for the fact that some dang fool will try just that.

Having actually made this pilgrimage to the city made famous by the legendary (Channel 3) television series “Mingling Romance” blockbuster; I felt that I was

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qualified to school you in how to not only get there but to survive the journey and that it was all just part of my Christian Duty to do so and considering that I am a practicing Born Again Pagan/Libertarian...this was more than a bit challenging to my true “Hobo Tour” Character than you would imagine at first glance.

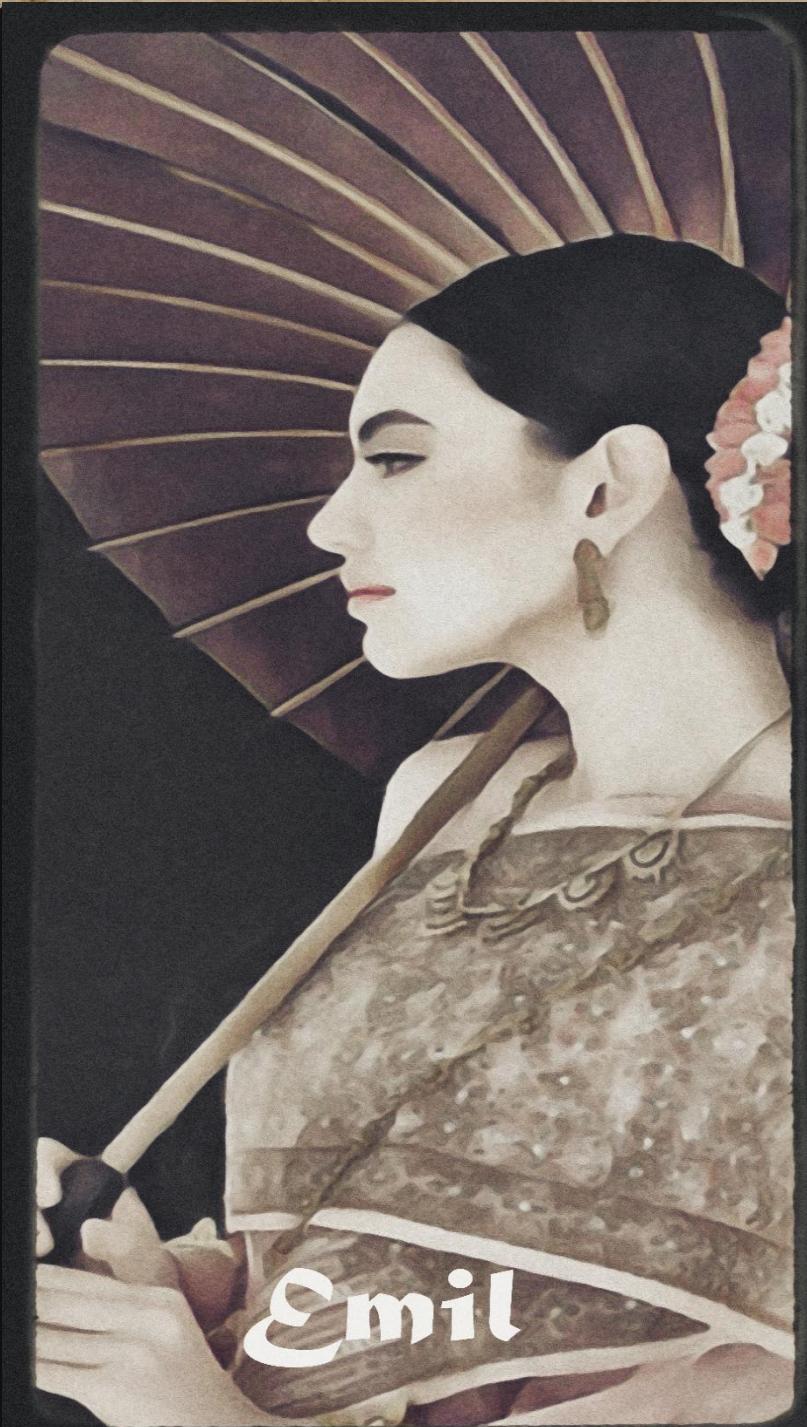
Let’s start your schooling at this point and time before I lose you and you end up like I was when I first started Hobo Touring.

Yes, Campers, I must confess that I was not always this cool, collective and experienced Prince of Hoboism but, I was a poor rube that elected to get my travel information from the Library instead of the book store (there was no public internet in those days to confuse or misguide me) due mostly to my devotion to being fragile (cheap).

What I discovered by a series of rather painful experiences was that the library’s wealth of travel knowledge was more than a little dated with the newest copyright date seeming to be 1967 and let me tell you how that set the stage for the vast majority of my rather challenging crime/adventure experiences on my first trip to Nepal in the early 2000’s.

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I quickly discovered once in Nepal. It dawned upon me almost virtually right off the plane (and without much prior warning) I was confronted with wide series of startling truths like how much things like customs, people and even time have changed greatly over the past 50 years or so here in Nepal.

Did I say that it was a most interesting trip to Katmandu? Did you know, it seems that they no longer have an official Hippy Trail...????

It was starting to seem like they don't!

It was gone...the Hippy Trail seems to have disappeared without a trace or even a notice to its new location and with my increasing frustration over my inability to find heads-or-tails of it just added my distrust in my library's travel book. Had it not been a library book, I would have tossed it day one into the river that was ragging through the city.

Seems like the climate, seasons had changes drastically radically from the book's promise of cool, dry weather...far from the endless days of over almost 100 plus degrees in Katmandu and torrents of daily rain which went a long way to explaining the raging river through the center of town and the need to wade

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through deep potholes of black water caused from the river had flooded all the surrounding neighborhoods around my hotel.

Like, so much for my library book's greatest fake tale of how that Hippy Trail was the hottest social venue(s) in all of Asia and that it was the one thing to do/see before ya die!

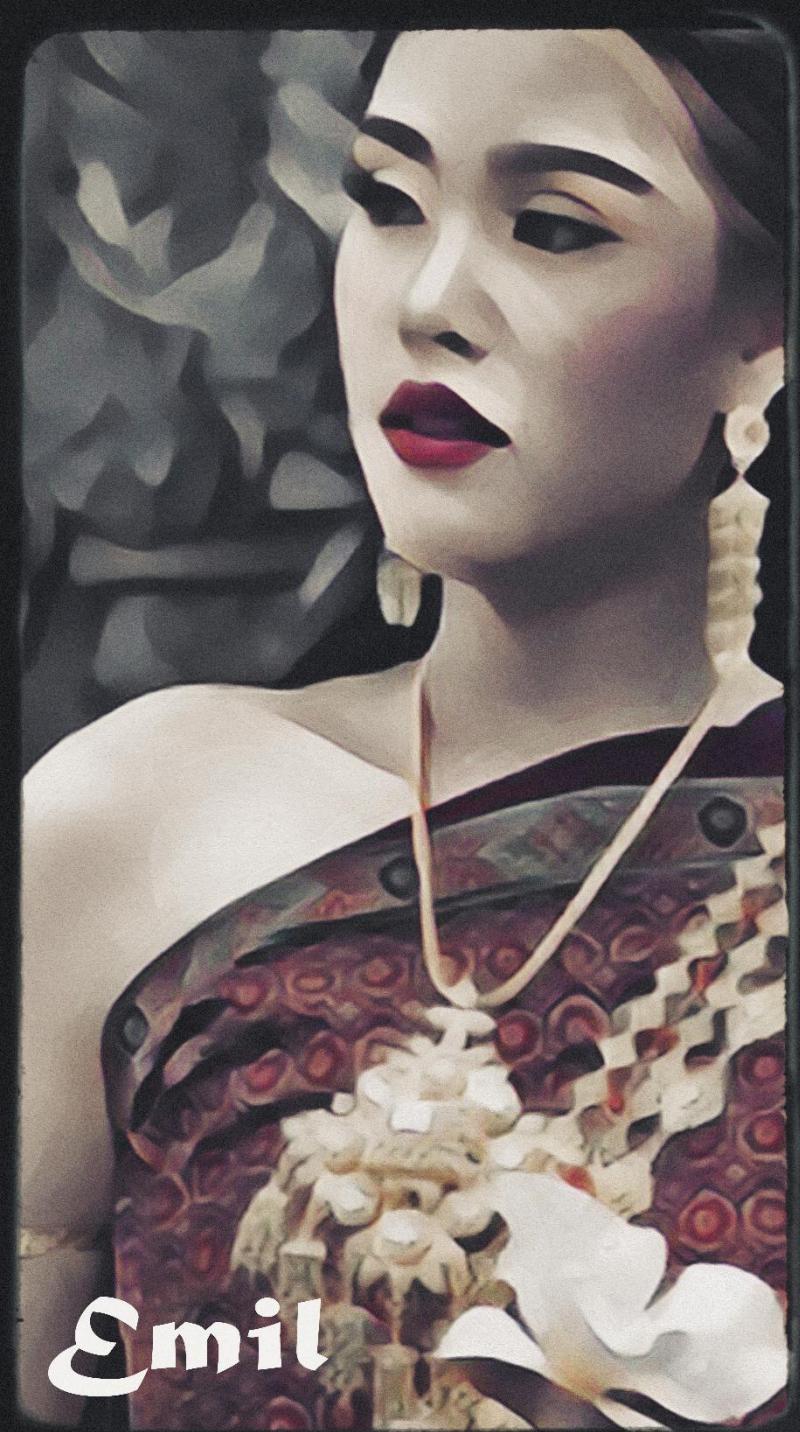
I wasn't prepared for any of this but, I was quickly schooled in a seriously re-educated episode after my arrival and my friendly enquiries which led to my temporary detainment after I mistakenly asked a local cop for current directions to

“WHERE DO ALL THE HIPPIES MET?”

He and his fellow officers led me down to the local jail house all the while they happily explained (to my ever increasing understanding) in between whacks from their official police-issued “crowd control devices” (canes) that the Hippy Trail like seriously died way back in the late 1970's when all the Hippies were dutifully arrested in mass, all given proper haircuts and then, they were all deported in mass back to India (where many of these Hippie Refugees still reside in small pockets all about the

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Foothills of the Himalayas – as it seems that they are still trying to raise funds to pay for their overstay visa fines in India Proper)?

“HEY YOU...ARE YOU A HIPPY?”

“Do you smoke?”

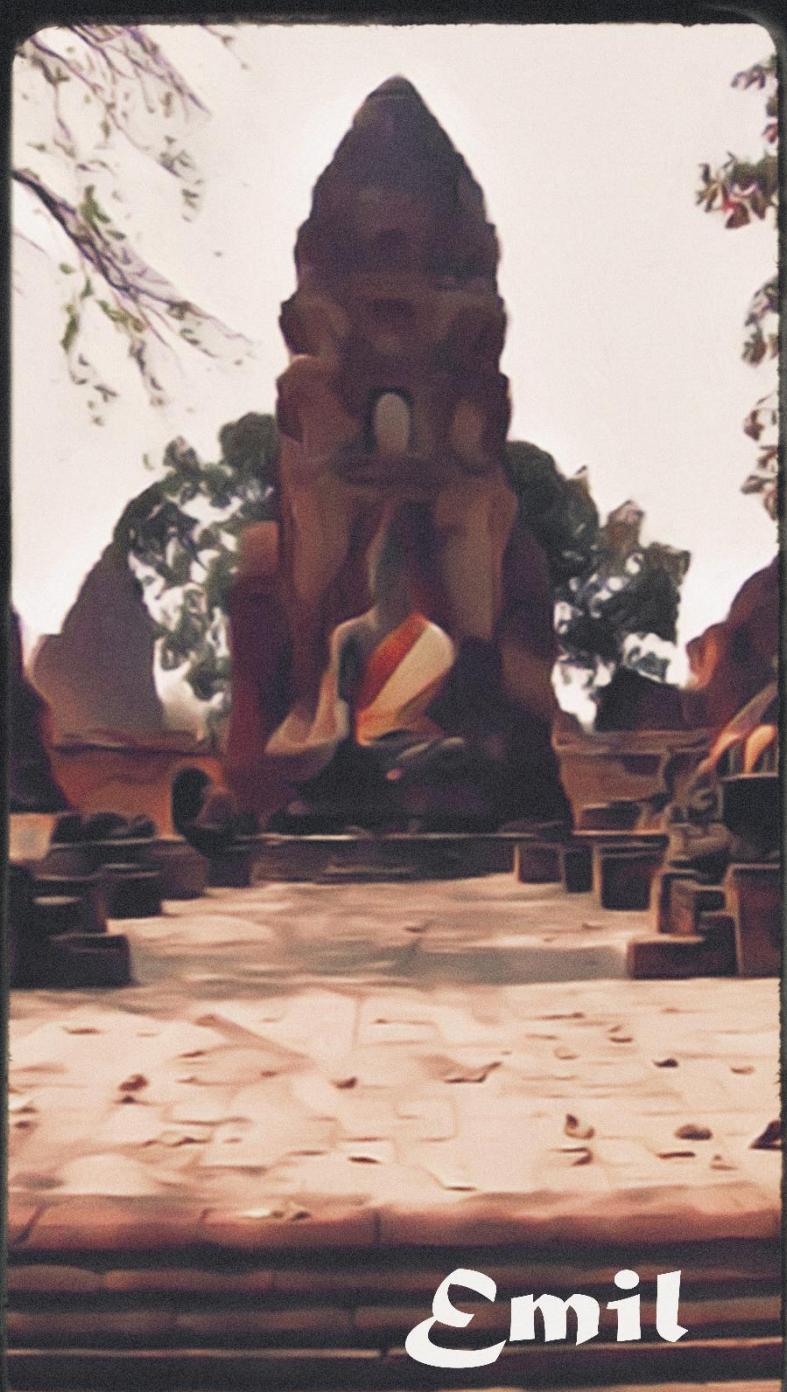
I didn’t get that one at first and I truly got upset that after the cop beat me with his “crowd control device” that he would then have the nerve to try and bum a smoke...

See Campers! The new tour books would have made me aware that this was often a code message for “Do you want Hashish or Opium?” Both of these local consumables carry a very harsh sentence in one of your local, friendly Nepalese Prison if you mistaking thought they meant Winston Lite Cigarettes.

As luck would have it...and for some reason, Old Lady Luck had rode to my rescue yet again or was it due the fact that I had given up smoking years ago when I retired my poser, professor pipe after I didn’t get the gig teaching English ligature at Bombay University and smoking became a rich man’s habit – which I could no longer afford on a workingman’s salary.

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Amazing luck! Strange, funny how it seems that for once being on the low-end of the poor meter and then adding cheap to that formula could save me a far greater lesson on how to never try and save money on travel books – which would be one of the many things that I would have learnt from my time in a Nepalese Prison.

While many we saddened that I have avoided the policeman’s trap as more than a few people (like WWWG’s Marketing Team) have told me that it would surly have made a great mini-series with (maybe even) Russel Crowe playing me in the lead role of the haphazard, Indiana Jones-like character of misadventures or maybe, a male version of the equally famous travel movie “Bangkok Hilton” but properly remained for the change in venue to the “Katmandu Hilton.”

You think?

Campers, can you...do you start to see that \$6.95 invested for the latest tour book from the book store instead of the library’s 1967 version might save you grieve, several nights cooling your heels in a Katmandu Detention Cell while the local officials determined if I was a Hippie or not and if your rich parents would make

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your bail (that seems to have been the real gold card standard there).

After several days, sitting in a custom-made tiger cage out behind the police station – it was for “Your Safety” they constantly reassured me as you know how tuff Nepalese prisoners can be on “Foreign Devils”...finally, WWWG’s telex and rather generous donation by them to the local “Police Wives and Orphan” Fund secured my release with only a minor caining before I was driven back to my hotel.

In the end, the experience will make a great story (someday) and might even ensure me true victim’s bragging rights or to help me establish the high moral ground of this new age’s WOKE Victimization Peeking Order Argument).

WHAT!??!

OH...we were talking about Ayutthaya...?

HOW RUDE OF ME!

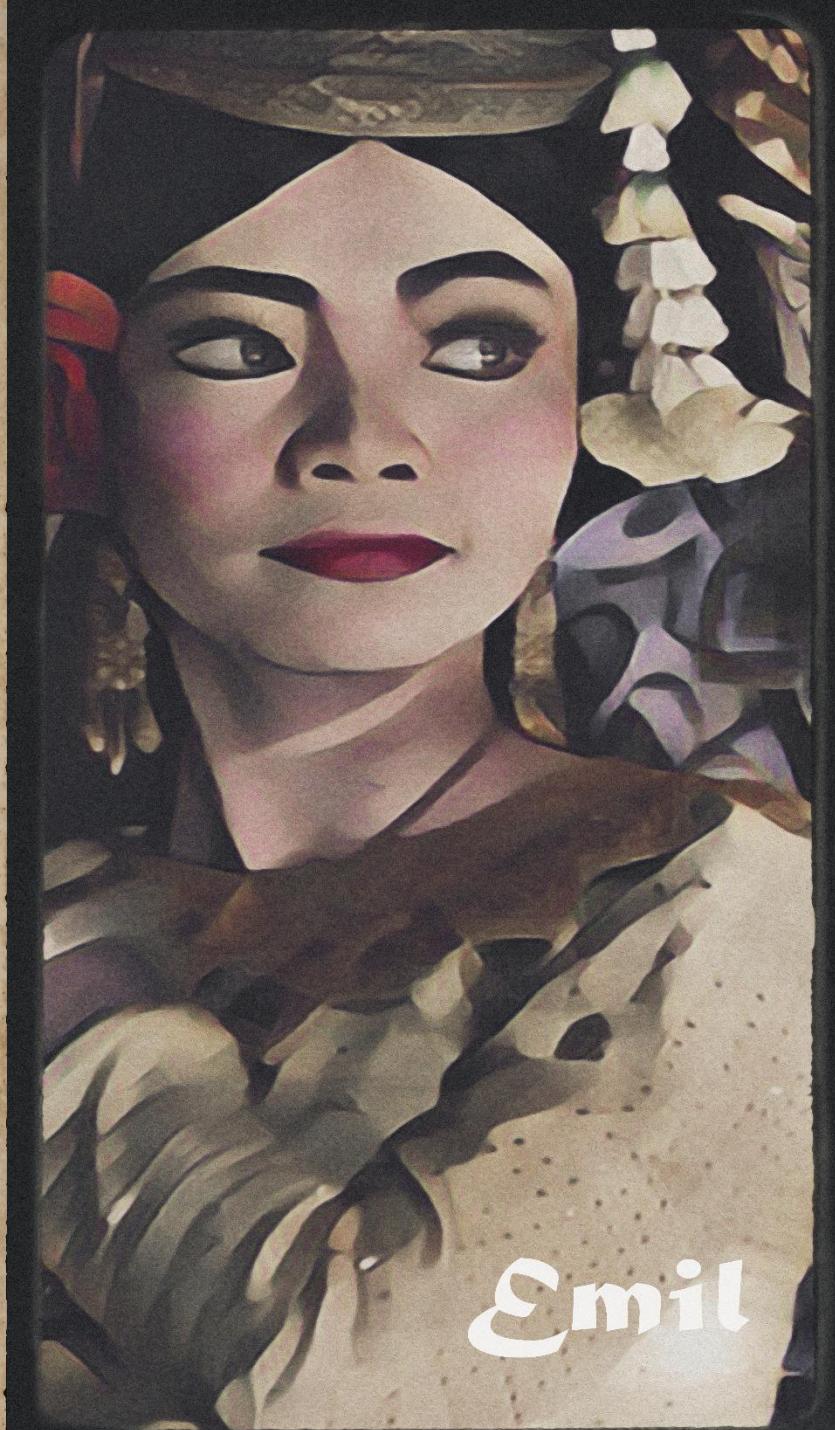
So Sorry!

Did I hijack this conversation again???

If you are still reading at this junction, I assume you got my main point that you can’t believe everything that you read as it seems that in this New Age of the Dawn of the

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Great Social Reset; everyone has their own personal spin of whatever nonsense that is out there about your upcoming trip to Ayutthaya that is presenting one-sided pervasion as truthful facts instead and you must take heed that most people are trying to sell you a tour.

BACK TO YOUR SCHOOLING...

As most of you are new to Hobo Touring, I really don't recommend it to you, your friends or family unless you really dislike them or enjoy the thought of them coming back home with an ocean of complaints and tales of misadventure that ruined their dream vacation...like I said, “if you hate them...”

For all of you Ayutthaya Travel Newbies, I am going to recommended something that would rarely ever cross my lips other than in total jest...

“TAKE THE THREE-HOUR TOUR!”

Look you will enjoy yourself much more, you will get a couple of nice fotos of you selfied with a Buddha or a friendly monk or two. You will have a funny story or two to share once you get back to work about some weird person in your tour group.

All-in-all, you will have had a reasonable good time and

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even though you will have spent far too much money and will equally complain that it seems that you spent more time in local gift shops than in seeing the sights; you will arrive home none the worse for the wear, tear and millage.

To be truthful and as I do seem to have this misguided rep for honestly speaking to truth (many times regardless of the personal cost to live and fortune); most of you will be better served with the Three-Hour Tour as it will serve you as a safety net and give you time to catch your bearings (sea legs as we use to call it) allowing you time to survey the lay of the land and help you plan a true adventure back to this location or for that matter, any other – this is a semi-universal effort.

SIMPLE...GOT IT! LIKE BOOK A TOUR!

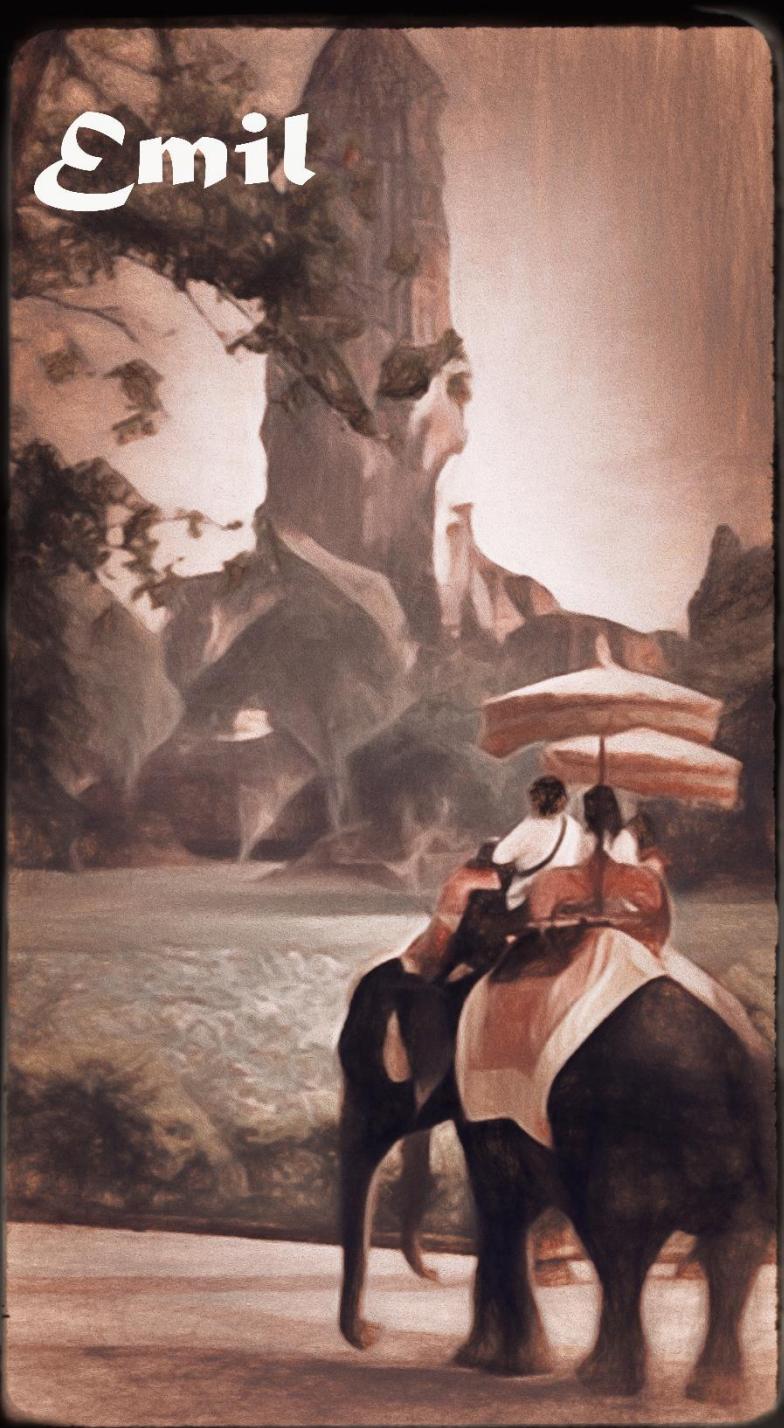
Hold up...you didn't think it was as easy as that...REALLY? I am disappointed in you, Campers!

What I have failed to school you in is the “Travel School of Reality” and in Chapter One, you will find a dire warning that there are many (sometimes, an entire tour can be nothing but) hidden minefields in booking tours and that you need to be an informed, educated consumer instead of a “Black Friday” Mystery Sale

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shopper and this involve much more of your attention/input other than a mere reading of some otherwise made-up “Yelp” Reviews.

There are many types of tours that sound exciting, almost other worldish and seemed to be high up there on any true adventure’s bucket list but; as a successful travel consumer you must:

Start with making your mind up as to where you want to go and when – as this will be important to whether your trip will get rained out because it was Monsoon Season or end of costing you as you went in the High Season.

Study the site in detail, use multiple sources and then compare to see if they all line up...this is where you might want to not trust bloggers or any self-declared TWIT Travel Expert like all those Japanese/Chinese Fan Boys who claim to be expats with extensive street creeds but who have never (really) been further west than 142nd Street in New York or to all those who are financially paid/sponsored by some investment/financial service/time-share who might be trying to sell you an overpriced timeshare.

Here is an equally descent warning about using any official, governmental or “friends of” websites as a

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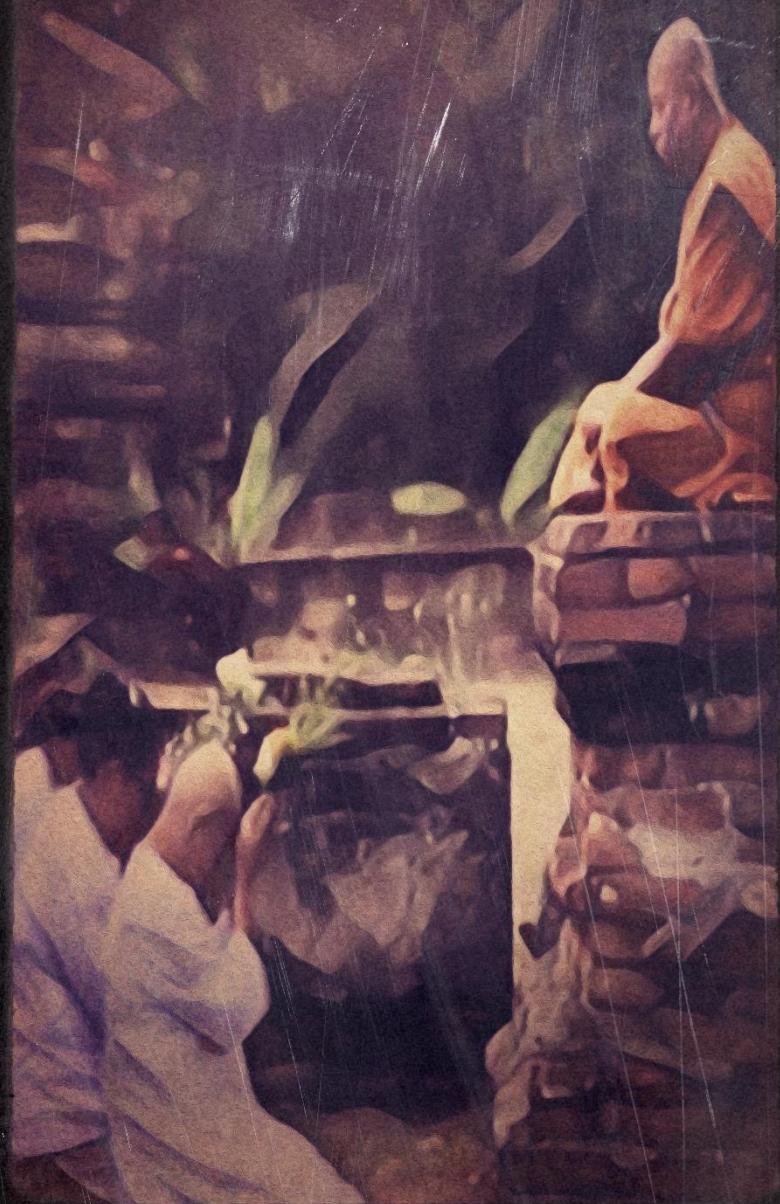
primary source of INTEL. None of these can truly be trusted and even the pictures they used might well be those they took before the Hurricane wiped out the resort or the tidal wave washed the nearby towns out to sea last year. There is no need or actual requirement for them to offer you any truth in advertising as many of these sites are industry or run by some government ministry that always reserves the right(s) to sue you, have you arrested or even banished from ever coming to visit the country if you dare to speak truth that differs from the officially approved truth that they are pushing/selling.

If you are visiting a larger city you can (I usually never recommend and sadly, I am NOT {YET} sponsored or paid by...might be available at a reasonable price....hint...hint) walk them mean streets of “Google Street View” but be careful not to trip over the street names that they graffiti across each of their street views This actually is a good way to explore where you are going, find out the best way to get about and it does help you feel like a regular “Jennie on the Block” even though this is your first trip. Now that you know where and what you want to see, it

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is now the time to start looking through the billions of tours that are being offered. It will not take but minutes to numb your brain looking out into the ocean of tour ads and just as quickly, you will begin wishing that you had never read any of this crap that I’m sharing...but, this the time to be most cautious as your pocket book and even your health may well be very dependent upon you making educated choices instead of

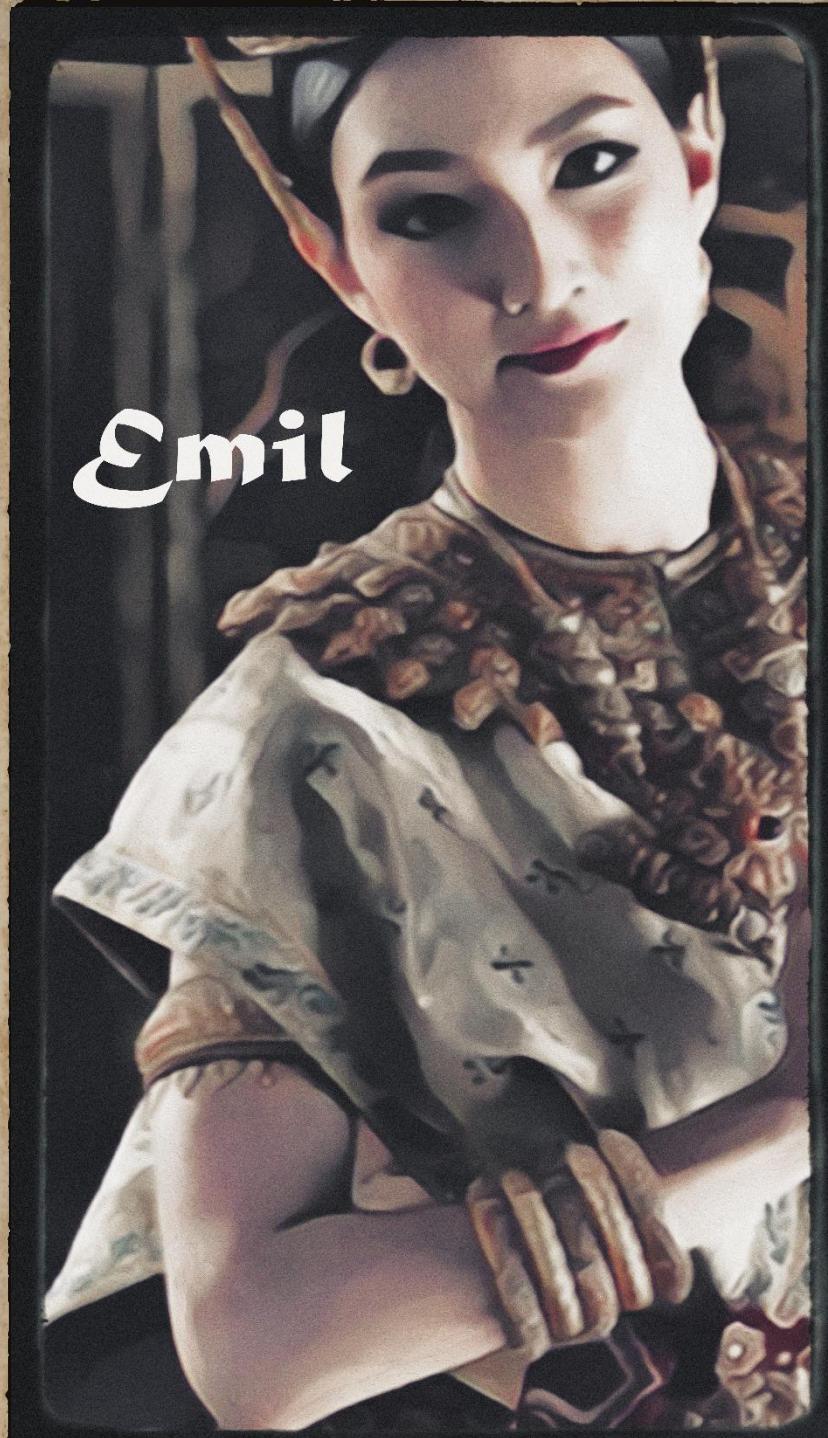
“HEY, BABE! THAT LOOKS COOL!”

Let’s start with that tour for a 28 kilometer bike tour which might be the trip of a lifetime in the cool wine fields of an early spring over in the Napa Valley or if you are in your early twenties, are in good health and are a world class or Olympics cyclist, if you even ridden a bicycle recently more than just down to the 7/11 to pick up you lotto ticket or bottle of Thunderbird or understand that even in the winter, Ayutthaya is a hot, muggy place swamped with an unreasonable number of big, non-stoppable trucks, angry tuk-tuk drivers who feel that you are cheating them/their poor families by not taking advantage of their generous offers to show you about for no more than ten times the normal rate and

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GETTING THERE AND ABOUT

you are about to try to go 28 kilometers (**THAT IS 28 KILOMETERS!**) in that life-taking mixture...death wish?

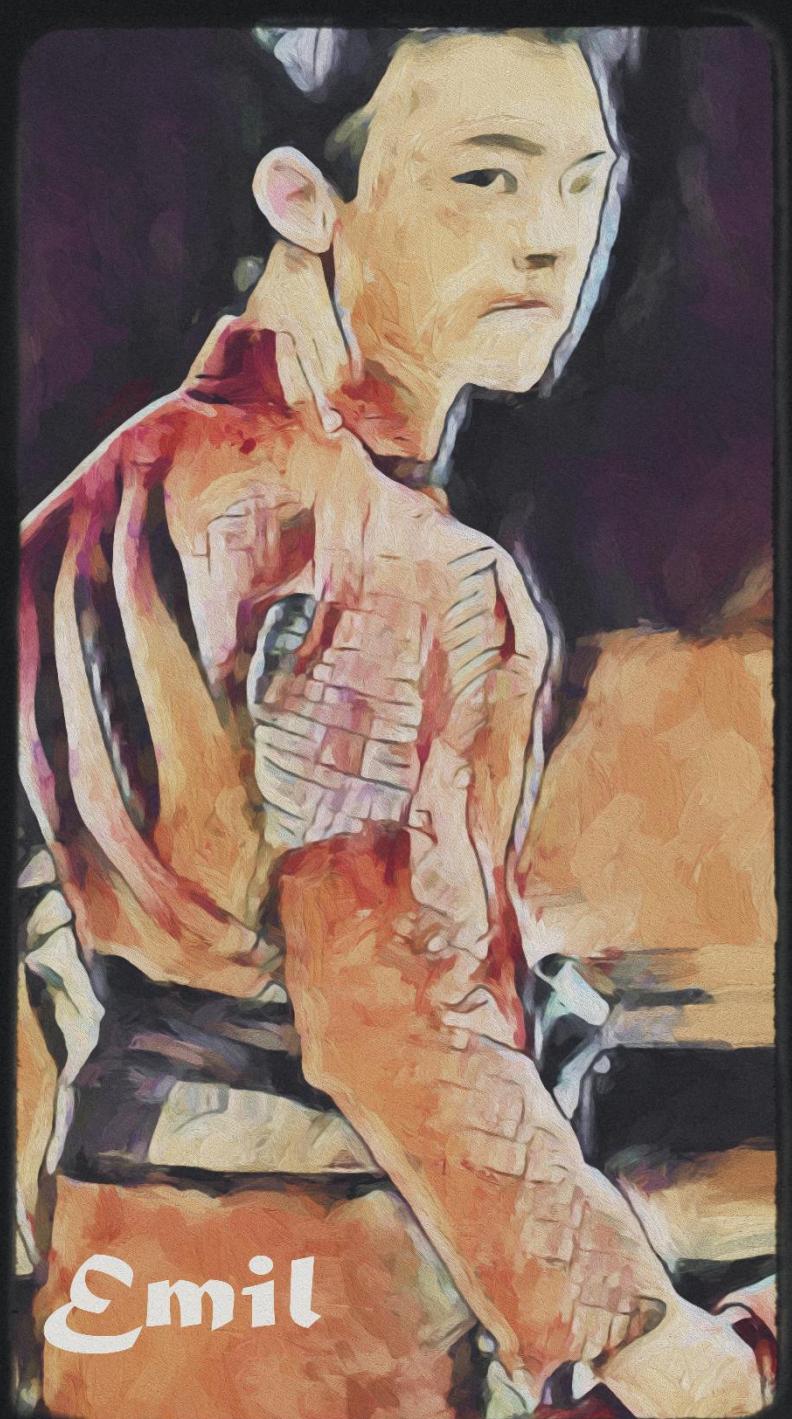
SEE! THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK!

Do not be swayed by fotos of smiling former customers on the tour's website as for all you know they are smiling because they made it out alive and survived a hellish, forced march, a life-ending 28 kilometer death march through a hot steamy jungle-like land on what was best described as a broken bicycle any more than you should take the glowing testimonials from surviving customers at face value – who is to say that they are being like totally truthful – Remember, in many locations through the world a bad review can cost you a heavy fine or imprisonment for slander and still, other people are on the take or are just evil enough or have a sick wish in wanting you to share in the pain that this tour inflicted on them or their loved one...misery as they say, "loves company!"

Do not let price (high or low) be the determining factor in selecting a tour as this can be a costly mistake either to your wallet or to you mental health/the enjoyment of your adventure as there are no way to measure a value index.

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GETTING THERE AND ABOUT

Many tours will carry much the same basic price tag.

Be extremely cautious here when you find a tour that seems to advertise the inclusion of many more sites than other equally length and priced tours.

There can be numerous reasons for this that can be simple logistic of how much time to be sent at each site. The given adage is the “more sites” the less time you will have at each...do they actually stop at all of them?

And don’t trust that the “fewer site” might offer more time at each location but in fact, might mean they spend more time in between sites at the tour’s list of approved gift shops or eateries.

The best way to know is ask for the trip’s actual schedule – good companies will happily send that to you and if they don’t...you might give them a pass.

Realize that these guys do tours to make a living and given the ever increasing costs of petro/maintenance of these large tour bus mixed with the equally demanding costs of hiring trained bus drivers and more so, licensed tour guides who really do speak other language without needing a translator; this mean that there is little profit to show at the end of a long day of cranky tourist who are non-stop complainers.

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GETTING THERE AND ABOUT

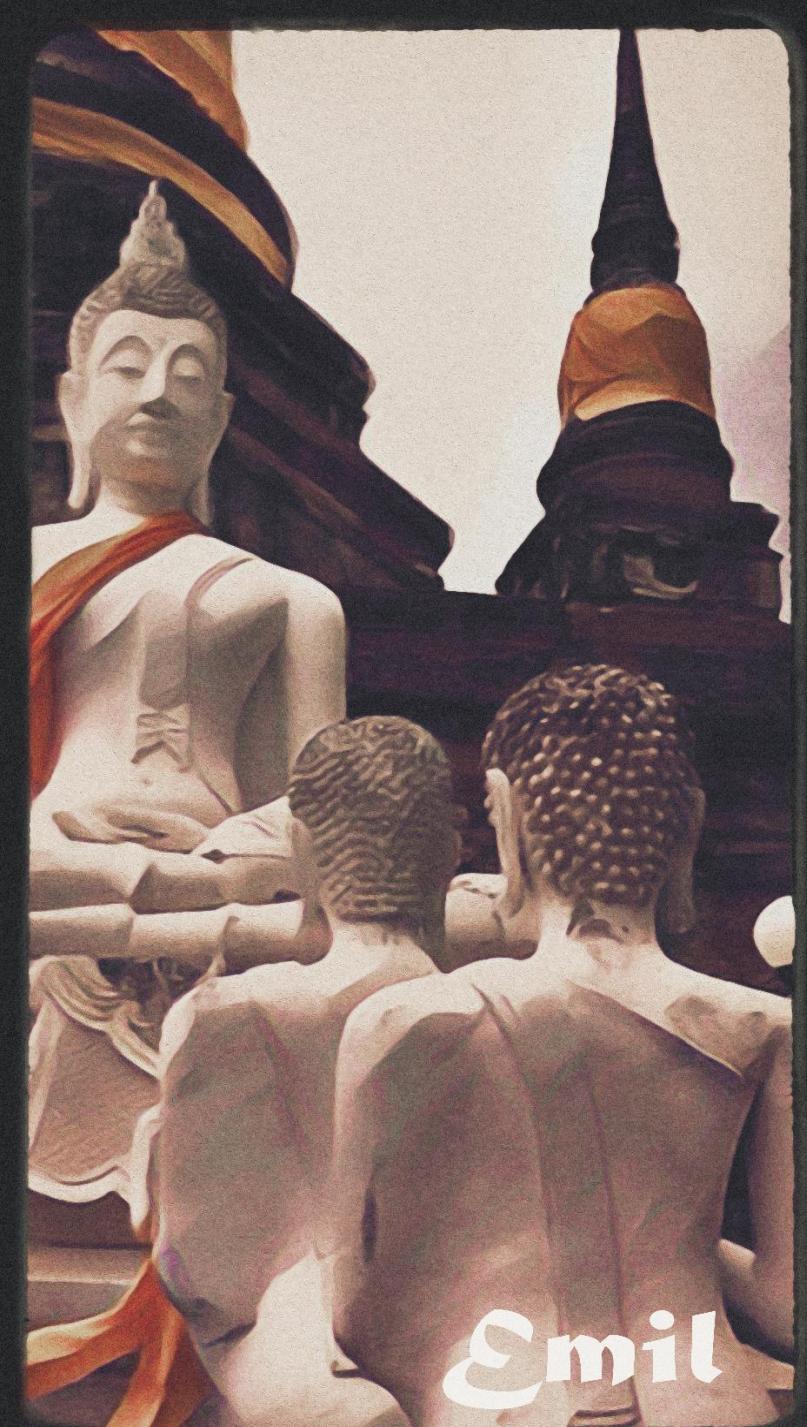
Given this, if they can make a few bucks off of cornering you in an overpriced gift shop with pushy sales clerks; I say more power to them!

The real relics that the gift shop clerk are aggressively pushing on you to buy were more than likely made in China as the Chinese Factory Reps have destroyed the local crafts market throughout the third world by the mass marketing of the copied crafts that are manufactured at a slave labor factory deep within the Great American Industrial Heartland of Central China and they sell at a ridiculously low price that the local craft industry can't match. As such, understand this and use your "fraud-a-meter" to know when to just walk away. **PLEASE!** Do not like **NEVER** confront them that they are trying to rob you as they do have the home court advantage, their senior uncle does happen to be the neighborhood policeman and when push-comes-to-shove, you might not be going back to your hotel with the tour if you make a ruckus!

Smile and just go back in the semi-air conditioned tour bus when in doubt or in any movement of crisis as that is the safest place you can be unless they accuse you of murder or worse, shoplifting and in that case, start running!

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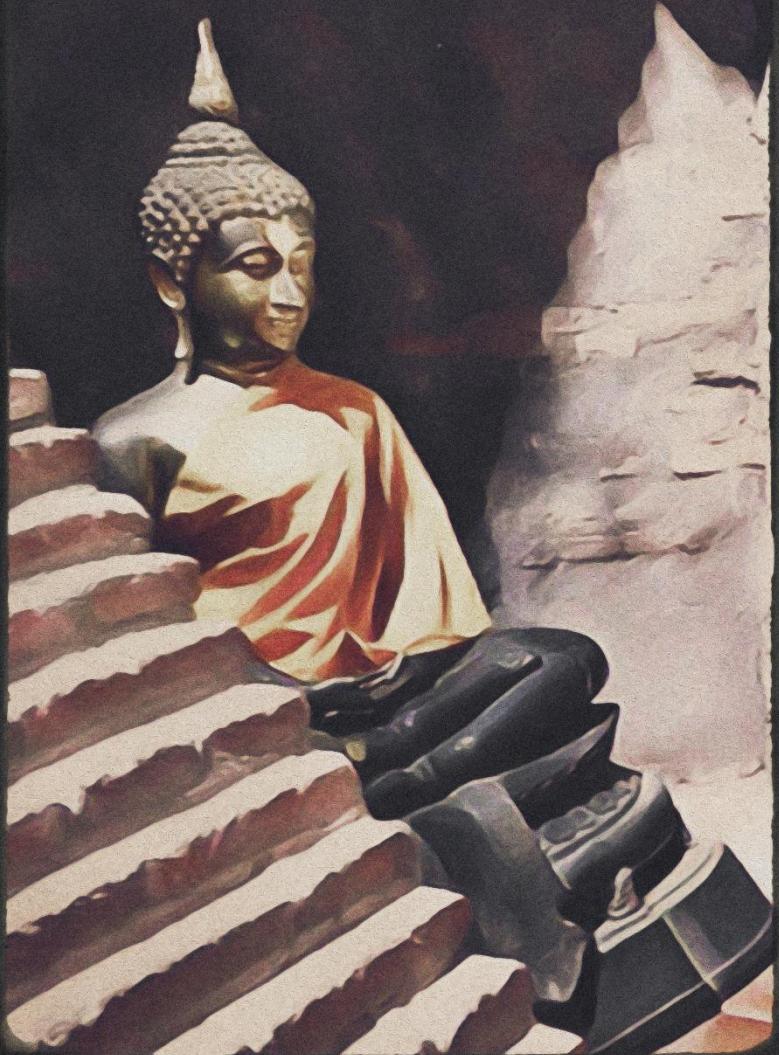


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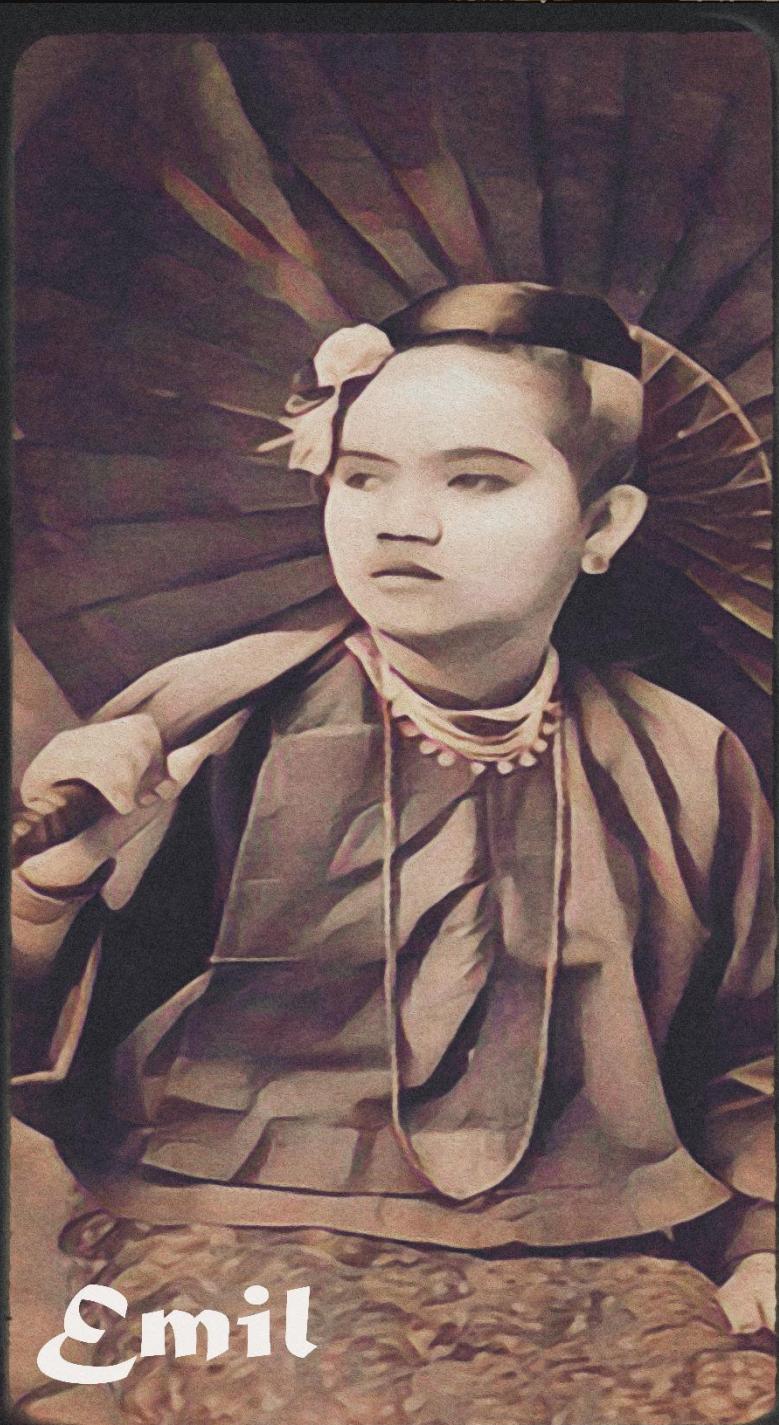
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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

I was waiting for the train to pull into Hua Lamphong Train Station and I nodded to the old man who was sharing the hard bench seat with me since the other another older man got up and left me to swiftly secure my seat on a platform where most later arrivals are required to stand or sit on the ancient concrete platform.

Not realizing that his attention was on the elderly man who was just walking away, I made the mistake of trying to find a response to his rather odd comment:

"Next Year...a better place...just this side of the cemetery and right down the road from the casino!"

The old man looked puzzled and somewhat upset as I had placed myself into the middle of his conversation with someone else.

This was awkward and had I not turned my attention to the just arriving train...this could have got ugly due to the sad fact that many of the older folks deeply resent "Foreign Devils" who are seemingly invading deep into their everyday activities like saying goodbye to an old friend at the train station or so it now seems.

I like Hua Lamphong as it is a near perfect copy of large variety of Northern Italian Train Stations from the last century. In fact, this station is also from the same era

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

having been built (someone told me) around 1916.

Which kind of makes a lot of sense as 1916 was a terrible year for architects all through Europe with most people caught up in blowing up building instead of building new ones and it doesn't seem to be such a bad thing that a couple of them (spent the 6-8 weeks on a tramp steamer that it took in those days to go from Europe, through the Suez and across the vast Indian Ocean to come here) designed this still remarkable monument to the Gilded Age of Siam or that it would be a true replica of European-flavored, Italian Modernism.

Not sure on who build it nor in how they built it but, I am sure that it wouldn't take much looking through the ether of the internet to find several “brick-to-mortar” accounts from those who built this down to the type of bricks used and while there are surely even more and numerous accounts of all those who haunted its train platforms or to all the “True Detective” Tales where the station played its role as venue and backdrop; all I know is that over 100-years later, I am sitting here soaking up the historical ambience while hoping that the train hurries up it arrive and I am not left to deal with an angry old guy with a longing to right all the wrongs done to him by (must be a multi-generational long grievance given his current sensitivities) “Foreign Devils.”

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

This is also the central staging point for most Hobo Tours and back in the days before the "Plague Year" as third class and commuter train travel is wide spread and cheap throughout most of the country.

Third Class is not for the faint hearted or for those that demand social distancing or even micro-millimeters of personal space. The trains are open aired (no air conditioning – sometimes, low wattage ceiling fans attempt to blow the hot air about), they are usually crowded far beyond the point that you might have a better experience in the back of a sealed, smuggler's semi-truck trying to cross the hot deserts of USA Southern Border.

From a seasoned Hobo Tourist, here are a range of tips that will make the experience somewhat better - even (occasionally) bearable and since I fear that I might be somehow (personally or Corporately) liable if something might happen to you (Rather strongly suggested that I include this "Clue Ya In" Guide by WWWG's Legal Beagle, Miss Kimmie) on following my advice to organizing your own grand train expedition.

The most productive pre-emptive thing you can do is show up 45-minutes to even an hour before the train leaves.

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

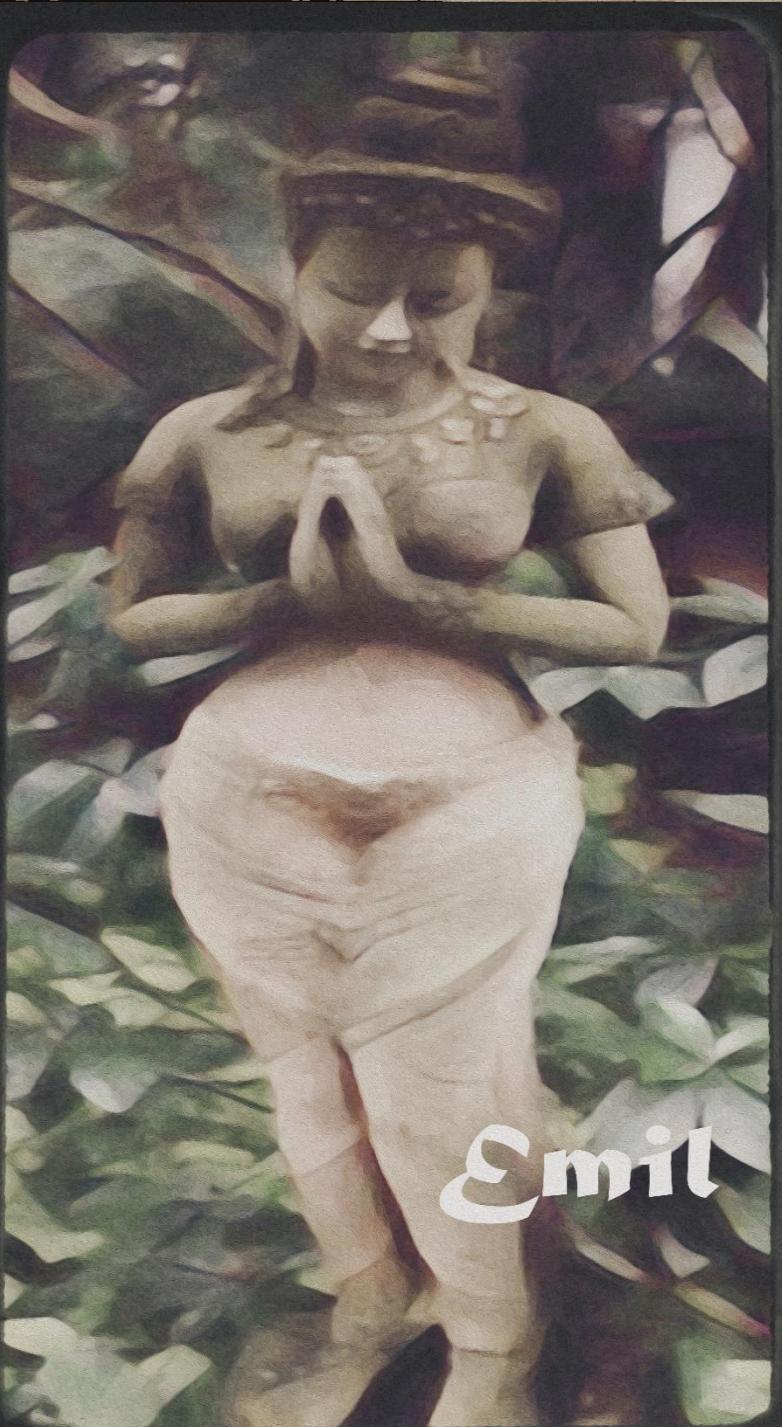
YES! I understand that I am suggesting that you go sit on a hot train for almost an hour before it leaves the station but, if you want a descent seat (without the sun being in your eyes for the entire trip and/or a window seat so as the oxygen is sucked out of the inner cabins, you will be able to breathe more or less fresh air – wear glasses or shades to avoid eye problems if you sit near the smoke from the diesel engines...trust me on that!)

If you arrive closer to departure time you will find that most regular travelers have beaten you to the good seats and on very popular commuter routes, all the seats will already be spoken for as this is “Festival Seating” and you will be left to stand for the next 90 minutes or so that it takes to get to Ayutthaya from Bangkok.

Where you set can be critical if you are not riding all the way to the end of the line and you will need to get off at any given point in time. If you are planning on getting off, do yourself a great favor by sitting no more than three/four rows away from the nearest exit even if this means sitting next to the train’s toilets – it is far better to hold your nose or stick your head out the open window for an hour or so than to not be able to fight your way through the sea of humanity that stands between you and the freedom of the exit before the train departs.

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

Do your research to know how many stops you are going and understand that there are no kindly reminders on these trains that "This is your stop coming up next." Counting your stops will prevent an even grander adventure tale to tell other trip survivors about how you were stranded at some strange, Ghost Station with no one but the ghosts to befriend you and keep you company...

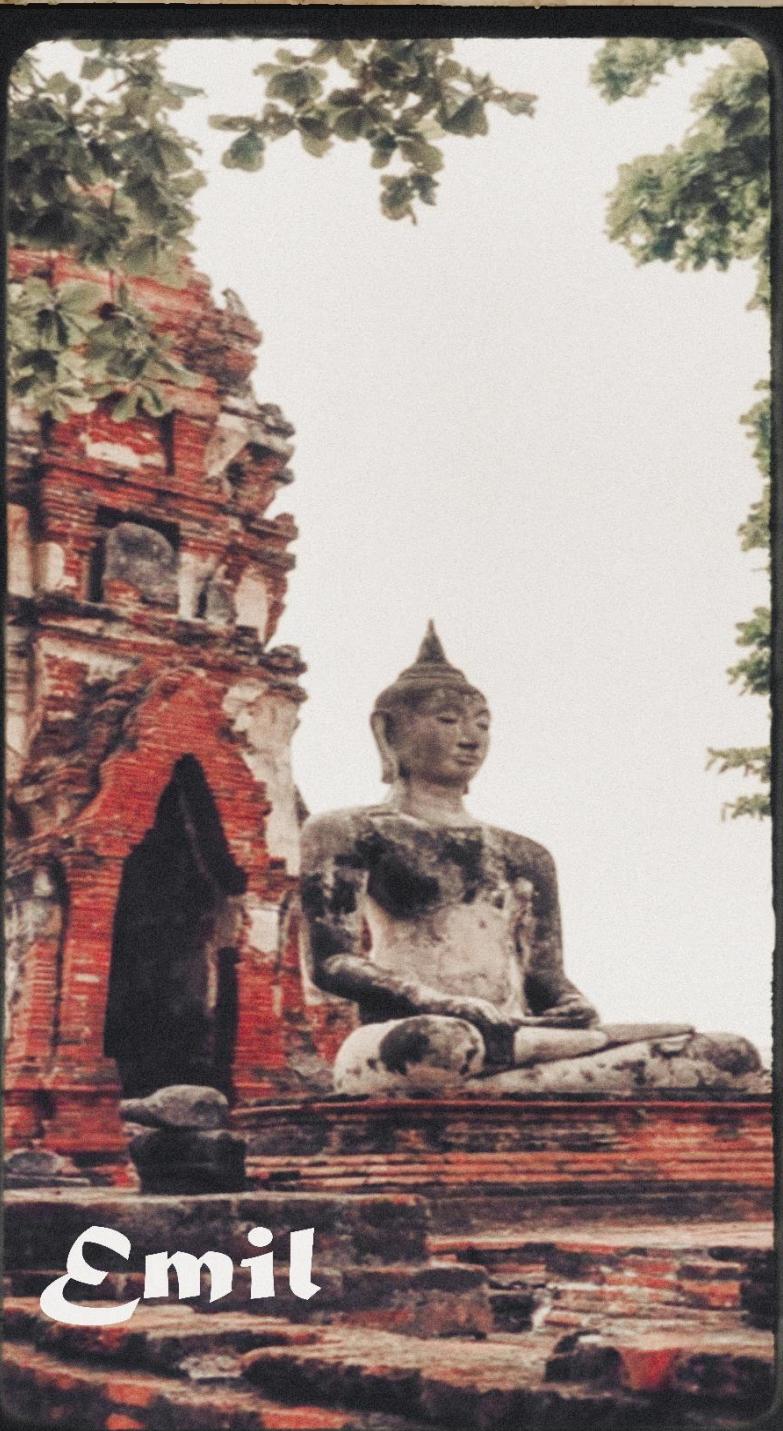
First time travelers and even season pros can become disoriented, distracted or some might even doze off to keep track of where you are since all the station signs are in Thai and can be rather small signs or hard to see even when you are sitting on the station side of the train.

If this wasn't enough...not all trains will actually stop at each station especially upcountry where it seems that every other station is a "Ghost" Station (abandoned) and stopping depends on the train's engineers seeing people waiting to get on or if they are ahead or behind on their schedule.

Get the train's schedule and pay close attention to train schedule which can every hour, every two hour or even just once or twice a day. Pay very close attention to the last train of the day otherwise, it could be a cold, lonely night waiting for the morning train...especially, if you got off at a Ghost Station by mistake.

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

Might want to take notes here and jot this next advise down for frequent, future reference or just tattoo this on your forehead that once you get to within one stop of where you are wanting to depart; wait a couple of minutes and start heading towards the exit as even though you are rear the exit, if it's crowded it is gonna take some doing to shove your way through a crowd packed so close it is hard for them to move more a couple of inches in any direction. It isn't like most are trying to be rude; it is that they are unable to give you the isle.

If you are prone to sea sickness or motion sickness, carry gum to chew as most these third class rail cars are several decades old and sway back-in-forth like a tramp steamer trapped in a wild cyclone.

Other than all these "You better knows!" let me tell you to enjoy the fact that you can travel up to 50 miles (nationwide) for about 10 Baht (about 33 cents in USD) and if you might really...truly be interested in or want to firsthand experience country/urban life at somewhat its grittiest; this is your golden ticket, Bubba!

Interested?

Whatz?

You trembling!

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

“I didn’t want to say anything in front of the others...”

HEY! I’m not some kind of TWIT “Cancel Culture” Monster! It just seemed that you were in the midst of some kind of panic attack from reading through my last monologue...and it looked like you had abandon reading this account until you reached the security of your “Happy Place” Safe Zone.

“Just saying! It’s OK!”

Let me cheer you up as I was about to tell you that the Railway Management does have a string of other travel services and might be a better way to get you there for the mere courage of asking and your kind willingness to pony up the extra cash they require to buy comfort.

A fair warning for the budget traveler, these extra amenities offered in these options increase as the price rise (somewhat drastically) to properly match your requirements for comfort.

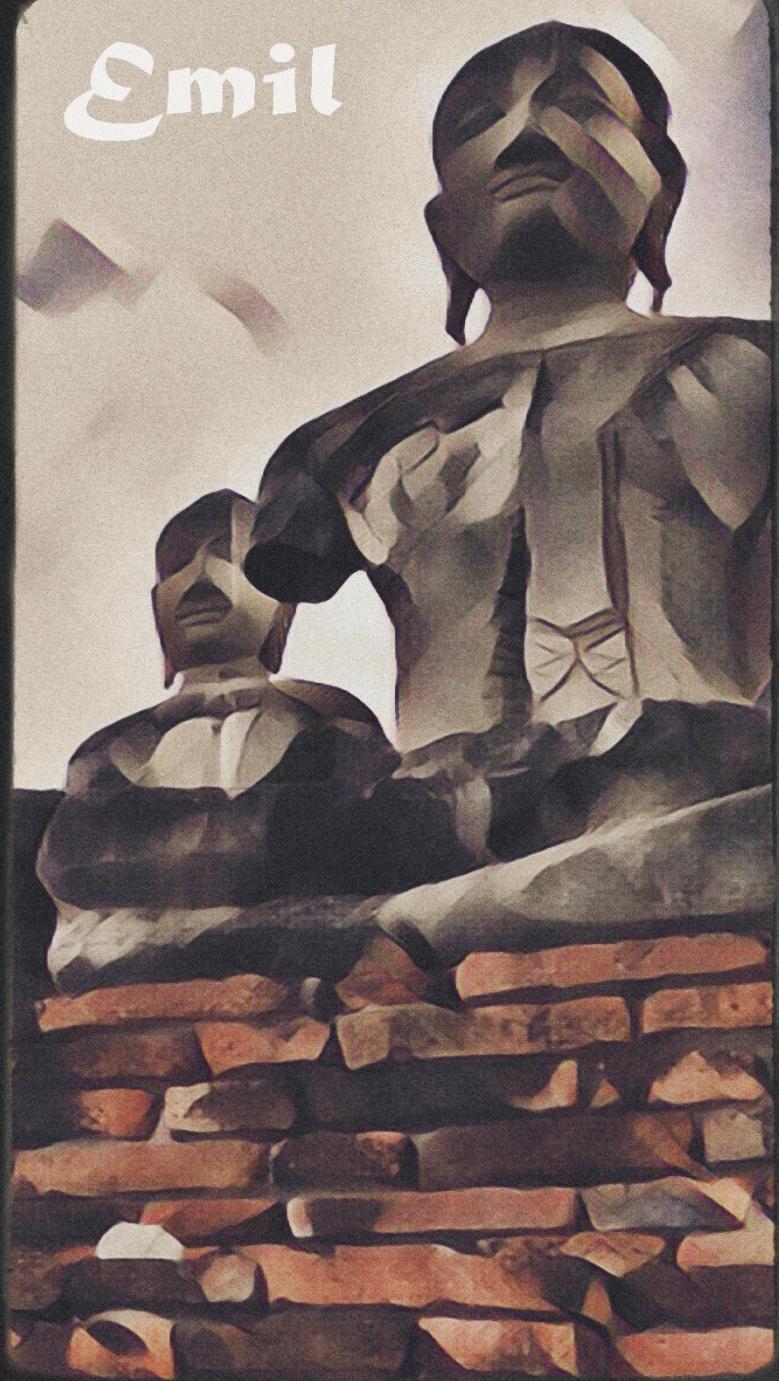
By upping your willingness to experience the life styles of the semi-rich and are willing to pay about 350 Baht to hitch a ride on a first class train; they will throw in a box lunch, air conditioning and nicer seats.

Please know that these special trains ran on a different schedule than the commuter trains and sometimes, need to be pre-booked as many of the long transit trains require assigned seating.

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

SPOILER ALERT: If go on an overnight sleeper train to Chaing Mai for to anywhere in the far south, pay the extra money for the lower bunk as the a/c units are in the upper bunks and it does get chilly not to mention noisier as those A/C units kick on during the night.

Like it is on you, it's your decision but, by morning, you might well be happy that you did...

Please understand I am going on what I have been told considering that I never have had the spare change required to experience this on my own...

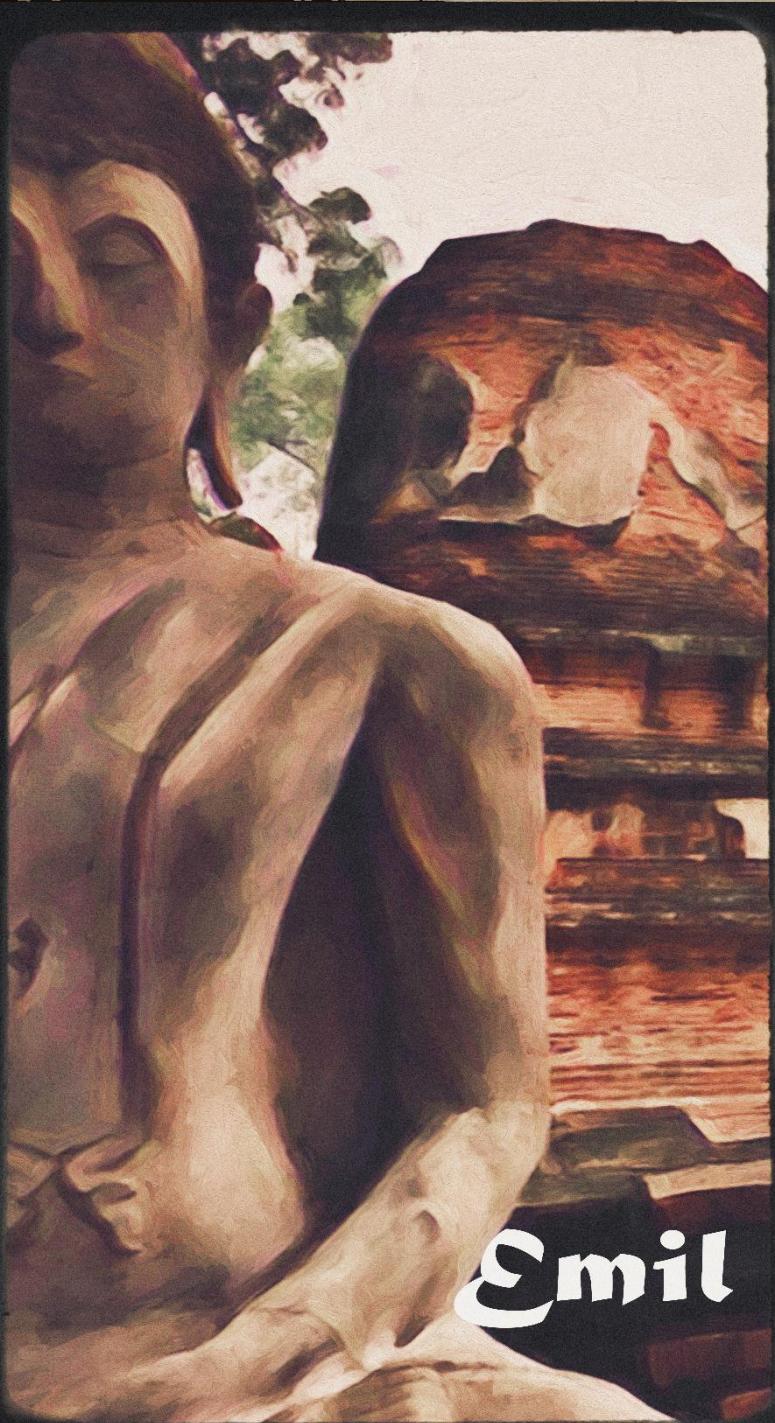
Then again, Campers! That is what a Hobo tour is all about...

SEE! You never know when we are gonna throw in extra and sometimes useful travel tips.

Several readers have asked me the difference(s) between Hippy Backpackers and this seemed like a good time to explain that to travel throughout the "Lesser Nation's" (National Geographic coined that phrase not me and if you got a bitch with its usage take it up with them...they have more money in case you are looking to sue...) these days, you seriously want to look semi-normal, take regular bathes, forego any Tee-Shirt that anything that your Grandma's Church Group might take offence to and burn them flip-flops or sandals (including those expensive Karachi or "Save the Whale" Sandals).

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JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

Look like you have money but, not enough to get you rolled and left to wake up with the worse headache you ever had, an empty wallet and in more advanced countries; the business card for the local wise guys who left you and on the back is written a phone number/message to call “when you get some more money” (written in rather proper English).

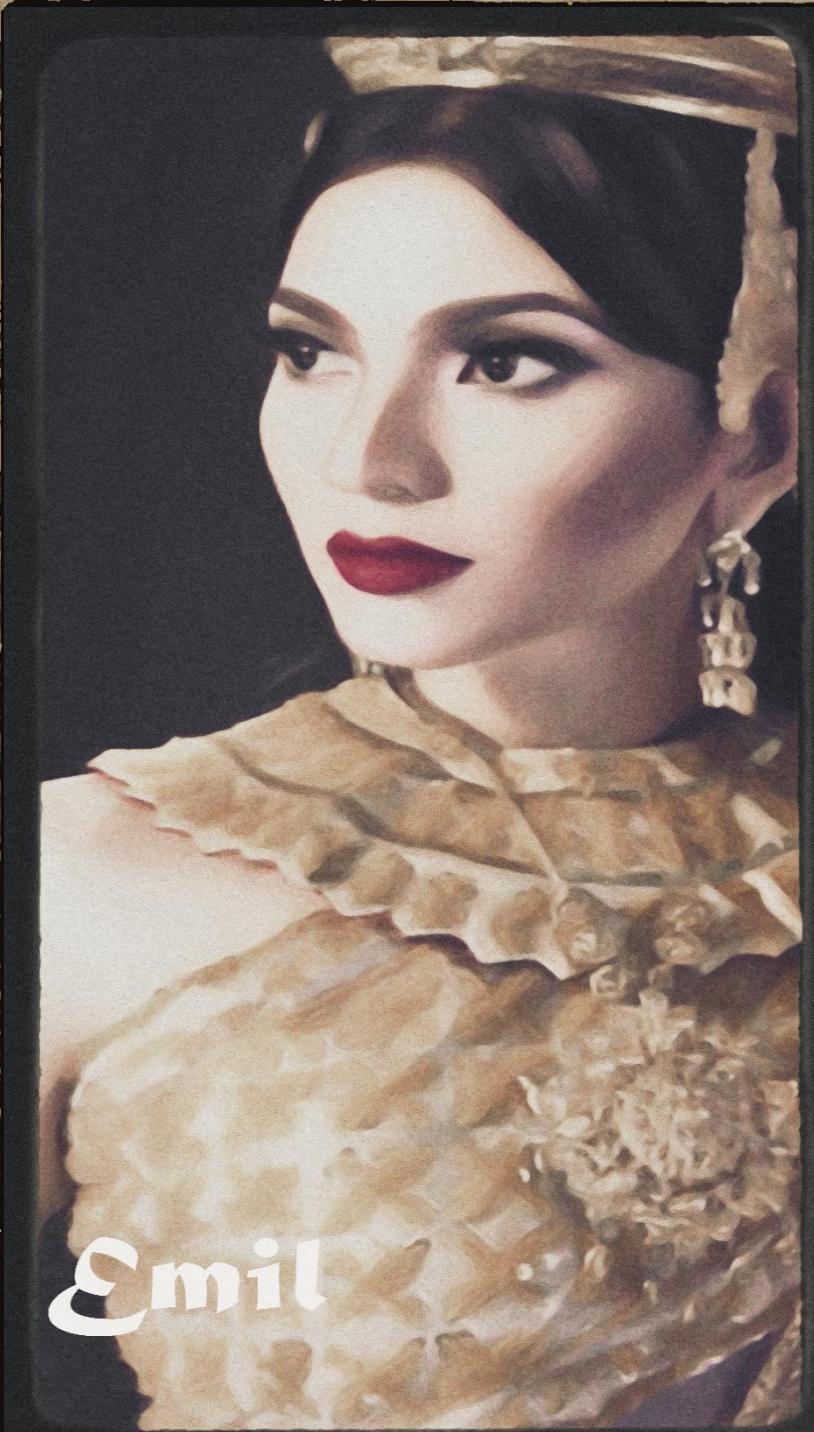
If you are rich, flying in on a private Gulfstream or 110-foot Catamaran just forget what I said as you are special and the local officials crack the head of any local who they thought wanted to complain. Of course, Campers, they will pay for this privilege but, it will be padded into their bill.

There are more ways to get to Ayutthaya from buses (both with a/c and those without...priced accordingly) that depart from Bangkok’s Northeastern Bus Terminal on a regular basis and which I don’t encourage as it could take like forever to get there. WHY? Because they seem to stop every seventeen feet for some farmer to get on with daily produce or rude chickens.

Now if you buy into these things, according to the TV series, Wat Phutthaisawan has a magical door through which Karaked (one of the story’s characters) accesses the secret military camp of Khun Sri Wisanwacha.

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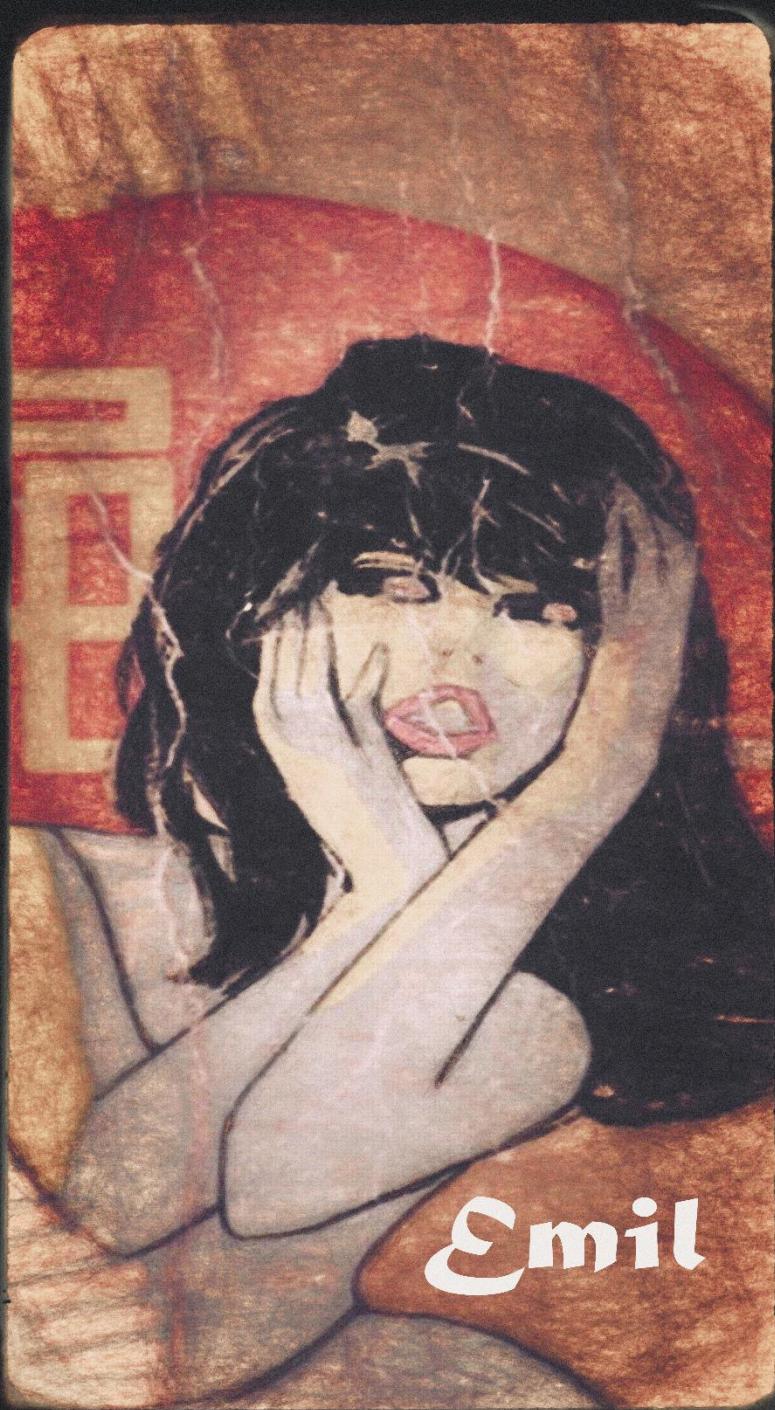
JUST THIS SIDE OF THE CEMETERY

From my understanding of this subject matter and the storyline of the TV Show, this is an actual time portal NOT a real Star Gate or a Interdimensional transporter which I more tend to venture that it might be as most scientists knows that physical time travel isn't possible but, Interdimensional "Sliding" between alternative universes will soon be a scientific reality if all of them good old DARFA Boys have their say...they got the funds...GO, SPACE FORCE!

Anyway...I actually did find the time portal's teak wood doors, but according to the official looking letter nailed to its door was it was closed due to "Plague Virus" Lockdown's restriction.

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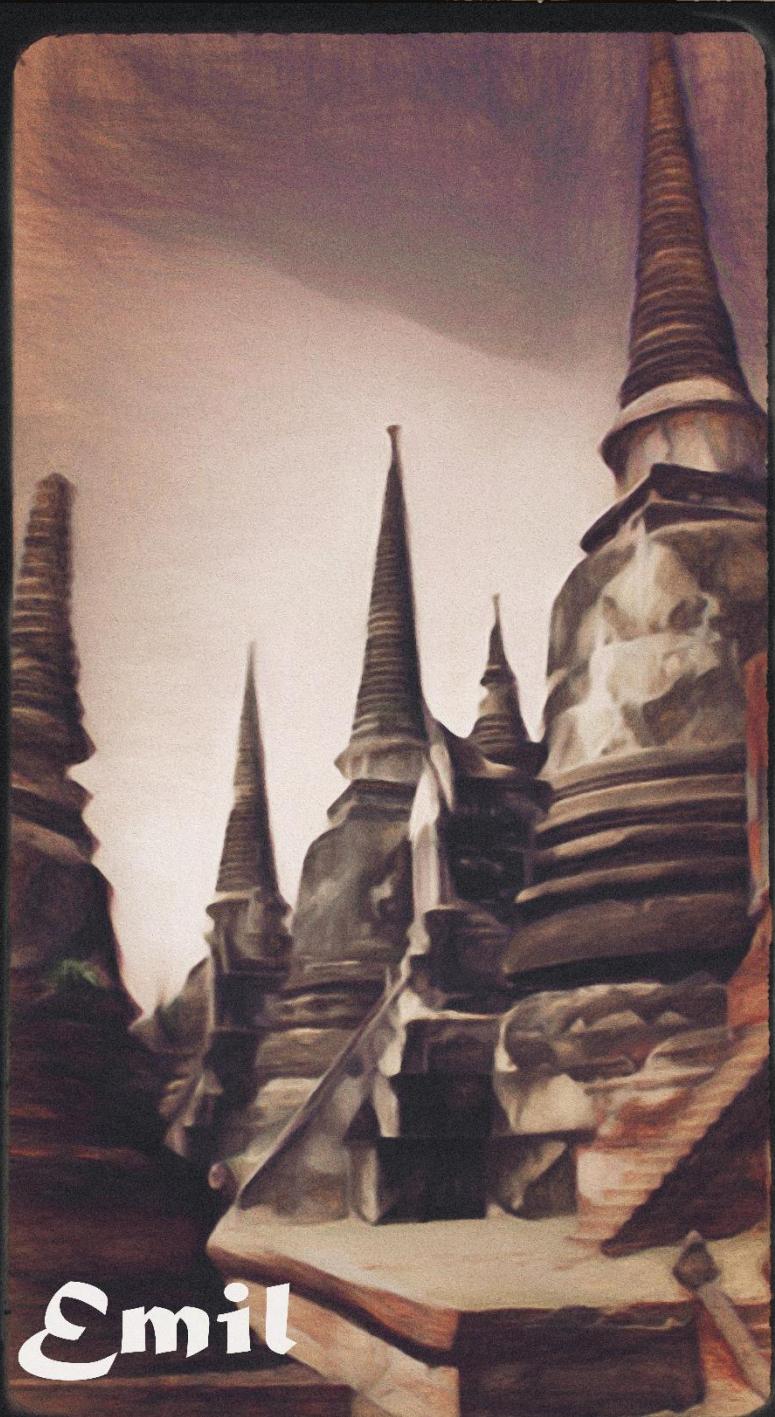
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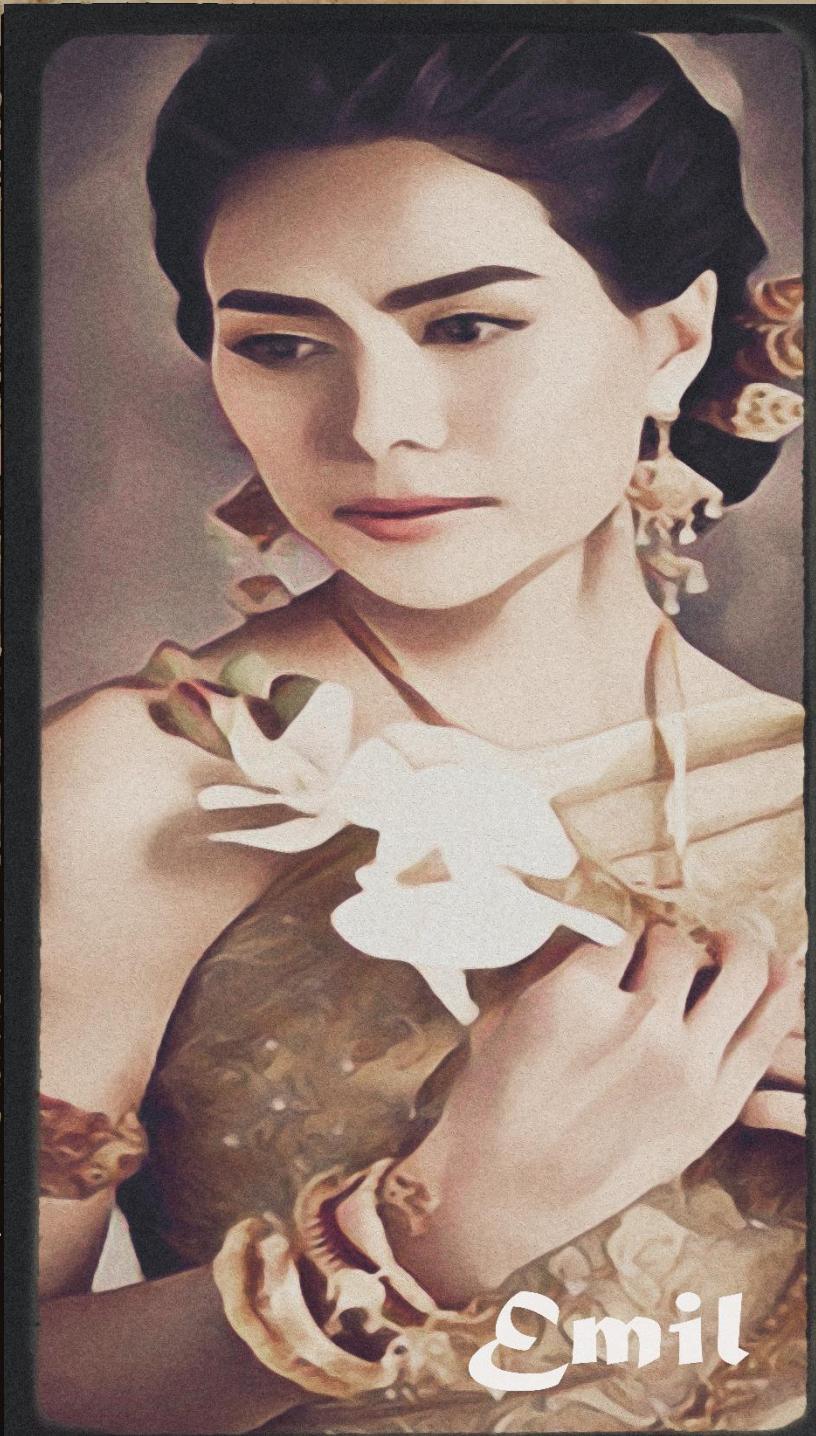
SETTING THE NIGHT ON FIRE

The ancient prophets were, at last, proven right when they forewarned that the Great City would fall in a whimper not in a heroic to the death struggle and it came to be in the early hours before the dusty red sun arose on that faithful morning in 1767 when advanced units of the Burmese Elite Warriors entered the city through an open gate, sealing the fate of the thousands of starving, suffering Siamese who still saw the Great City's defenses as unbreathable and held deep trust in the might of the empire's greatest warriors that had defended the city for almost a year-and-a-half from being overrun by the Burmese Horde.

In the end, it was not for lack of courage amongst the great warriors and their stewardship of the city's huddled masses but, their betrayal fell upon the once noble sons of the Great City that conspired with Burmese Agents to betray this deep faith and without a thought to what would happen to the city's population at the hands of an angry army of Burmese and their mercenary armies that had surrounded the great city; they sold out the city's defenses in a desperate, greedy bargain to save their own skins and/or curry favor with their new Burmese Overlords to restore their own lands and titles in the dawn of the Burmese Years.

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SETTING THE NIGHT ON FIRE

The Burmese had believed that “one should never interrupt your enemy when they are mistaking a mistake” and so they won their victory not on the plains of great battle as the might and courage of the Siamese Warriors could not be matched in open combat especially by their army who held more mercenaries than actual Burmese Warriors but, the battle was lost in the back alleys and the royal courts of the great city.

It was through hidden intrigue and in openly fueling the corruption/greed of certain members of the royal court with the seduction of gold and secret food rations that they turned the people of the great city upon their own selves.

So the Burmese laid siege to the Great City, starving the citizens while allowing the elite to grow fat on secret deliveries of food to those who had elected a traitor’s status over the starvation of their families and self.

Even down into modern times and it still remains true today, this part of the story is thought to be better downplayed and forgotten as it doesn’t play into what children are taught in school about the Golden Age of the Great City.

Ayutthaya was ransacked in one of history’s greatest urban dismantling project next to what the Russians did

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SETTING THE NIGHT ON FIRE

when Stalin personally took example from this Burmese Rout of this Great City and applied its many lessons to Berlin in 1945-46.

Like what happened in Berlin, the Great City was dismantled brick-by-brick by force labor drawn from the tattered remains of the city's thousands of survivors and each brick was shipped back in massive ox-cart caravans to spur one of the greatest urban expansions and building frenzies in the long history of Burma. Anything that was too big or difficult to move was raised to the ground, moments where ground under the heels of the Burmese War Elephants and then was burned to the ground by vengeful Burmese Mercenary Army.

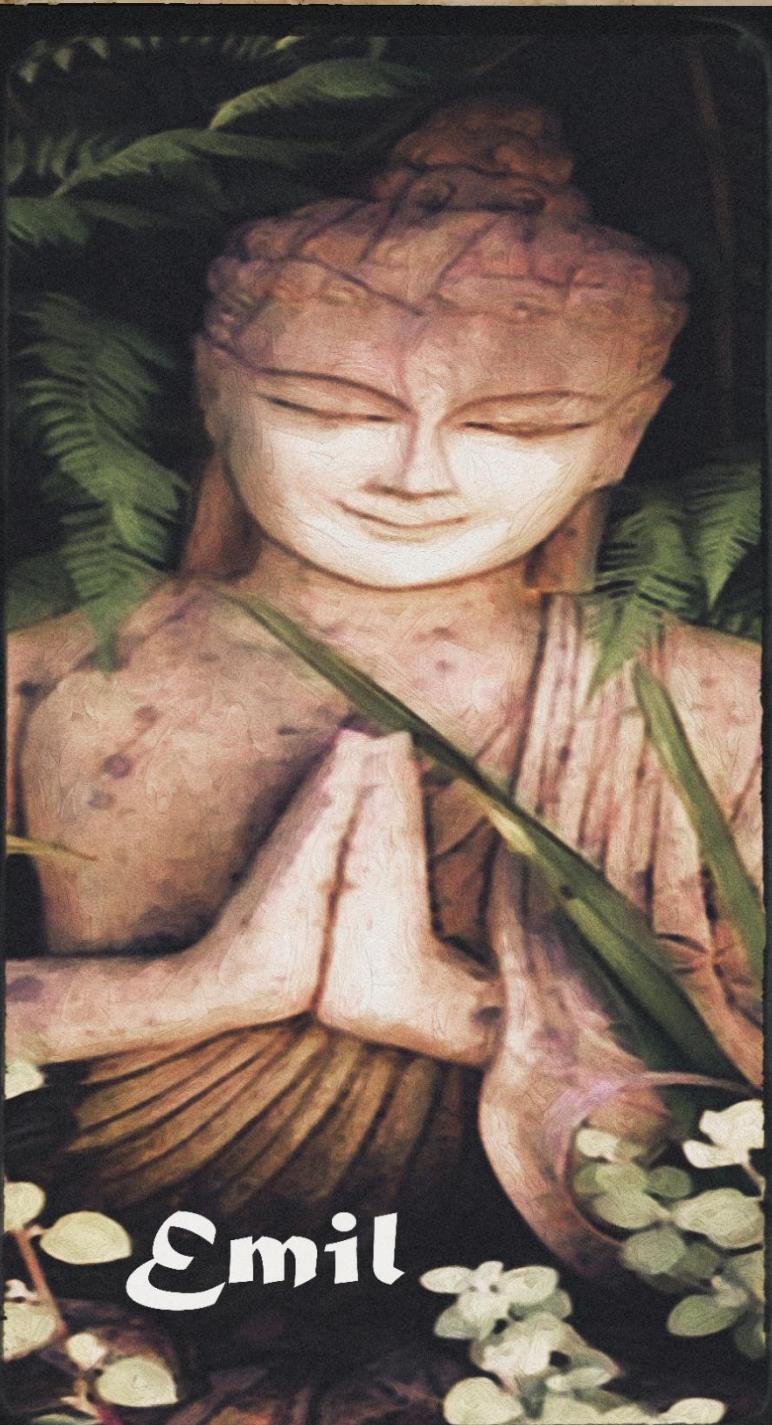
So complete was the destruction and to an extend the trauma of the fall of empire was so great that like Carthage had in Roman Times, the city was never to be rebuilt beyond a small farming community that sprung up many generations after the collapse.

Many good denizens of the great City died in the days following the fall and those few who actually lived to see the city completely raised were taken back to the Burmese Homeland as spoils of war or slaves.

In the end, the Burmese had not been honourable men as they did little to keep faith with the traitorous noble

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SETTING THE NIGHT ON FIRE

sons who sold out they heritage and kinship for a place in Burmese Society. Many if not most of these traitors were taken back in chains and then sold as “coolie” field slaves upon arrive.

Do you blame the Burmese Leaders?

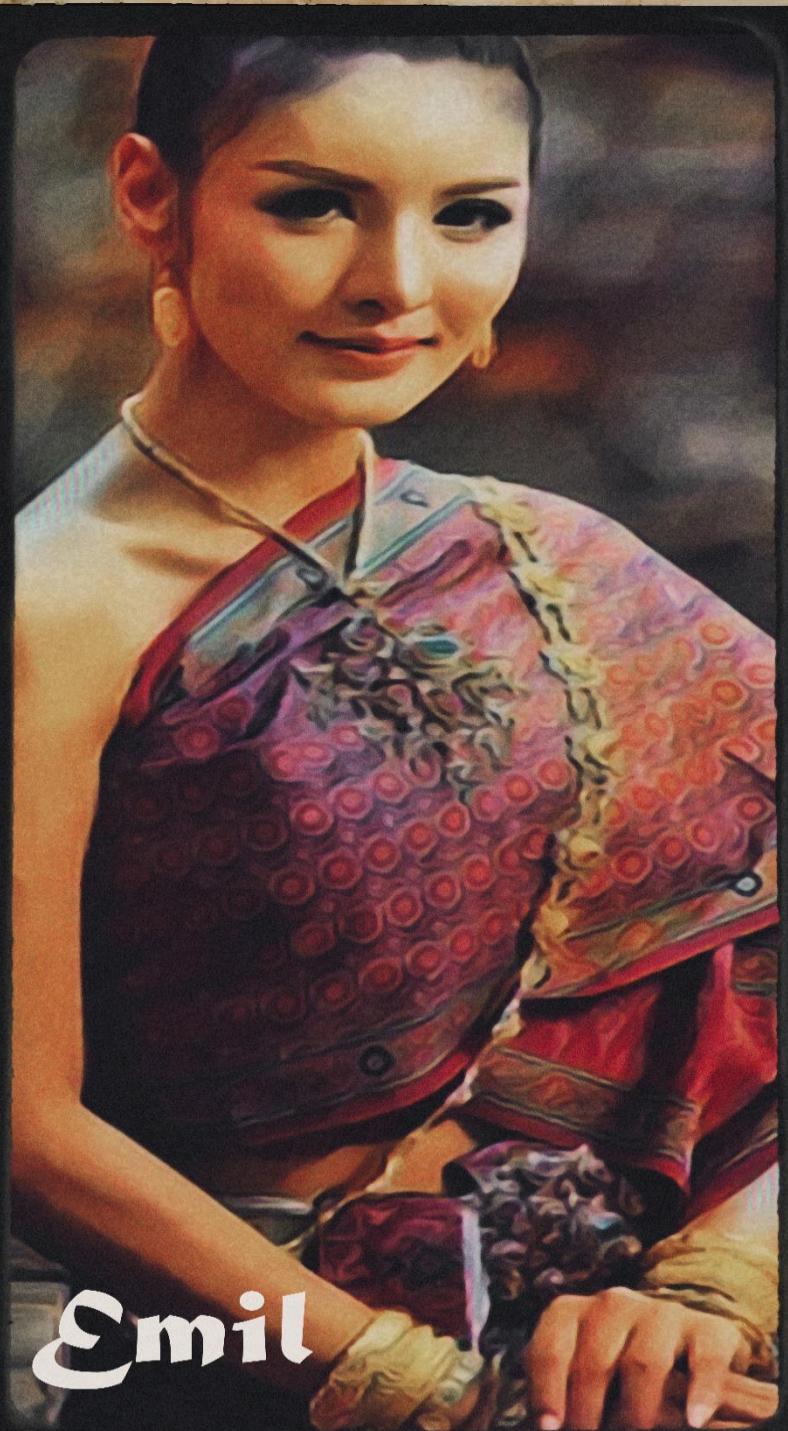
The Burmese were not stupid people and they well understood that these noble sons were lower than snakes in that they sold out their own people without blinking even an eye and the Burmese were smart enough to know that given even half-a-chance that these snakes would (like any viper) turn on their new masters without thought or concern?

Some survivors who had heeded the warning signs, the open confusion of the city’s fall fled towards the south to Thonburi (now west of Bangkok) regrouping and building a new capital under a new leader that rallied and gathered up the scattered remains of the empire’s warrior class to fight the Burmese Mercenary Horde to a standstill in a long series of open-field battles that are now lost to legend.

Your upcoming visit will quickly demonstrate amongst the sea of headless Buddhas and by walking along the fractured walls and framework of what little the Great Burmese Wreaking Crew left in its wake.

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SETTING THE NIGHT ON FIRE

Given all this, the remains of the Great City does have a limited appeal to mostly construction demolition fans, for the bragging rights of "been there, done that!" and to have a story, a selfie of two of your dressed in the Golden Age's grab while standing near the popular sites portrayed in the famous TV series.

Other than that...what is left to see?

Not much...to be Hobo Tour honest with you.

Sorry, to the local tourist board, all the tour operators and souvenir venders that depend upon the legend of the Golden Age to make a decent living.

NO! I am not saying that you shouldn't go but, that those who make a living here need to step up their game with maybe...Disney like re-enactments of the royal court or battles fought and do restore the local artist and craft community to create souvenirs instead of the cheap knock-offs sold by most merchants.

UPDATE: They seem to have listened and there are now several museums that have re-assembled many of the crafts, religious symbols that have been repatriated from Burma in modern times. While still rather limited in the scope of its presentation(s), it does seem to be a step in the right direction to give the young generation of a visual to the greatness of the city that once held over

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SETTING THE NIGHT ON FIRE

1 million souls and was a jewel of a vast empire other than the current, stark presentation of national defeat, of deep disillusion of a time of great sorrow and plight.

THE DEMON TIME

It was written in a now dead language from a mostly forgotten age, it tells the tale of how our ancient humans ancestors created "Time" and then made it their master...

Time and its many streams of minions soon became our greatest gods, we were only left to tremble before the overwhelming power that we gave it and even into these later days, are we still forced to worship upon the alters that our ancients built for it.

Even the Bible forewarned us to the great folly of our invention and for the great powers that we so easily gave away and how without more than a single thought, our ancients set in place a curse that would actually outlast all human passage.

Being a vengeful, a most wicked demon who took up the mantle of our master and with that it controls...it dictates our very life on earth...it decides our faith, our life...

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THE DEMON TIME

our very death...all secretly written into its Book of Life - a scripted role that each of us walk-ons, stagehands or even, the bit players must act out in the passage/the wake of Time itself.

Time grows stronger with the passage of each year as we grow weaker in our ability to fight back against it. Time was created outside of our own controls and thus will live forever and it seems to feed upon the terrors it brings to us.

In that forgotten age before we created Time and set it to measure/control of worth of each soul, it was written that humans lived for thousands of years and that death was most rare unlike in modern times where most humans rarely see a mere hundred years.

As the Bible tells us that the truth of Time is that it is all artificial, its all fakery because it was created by the power of humans not in the glory of God.

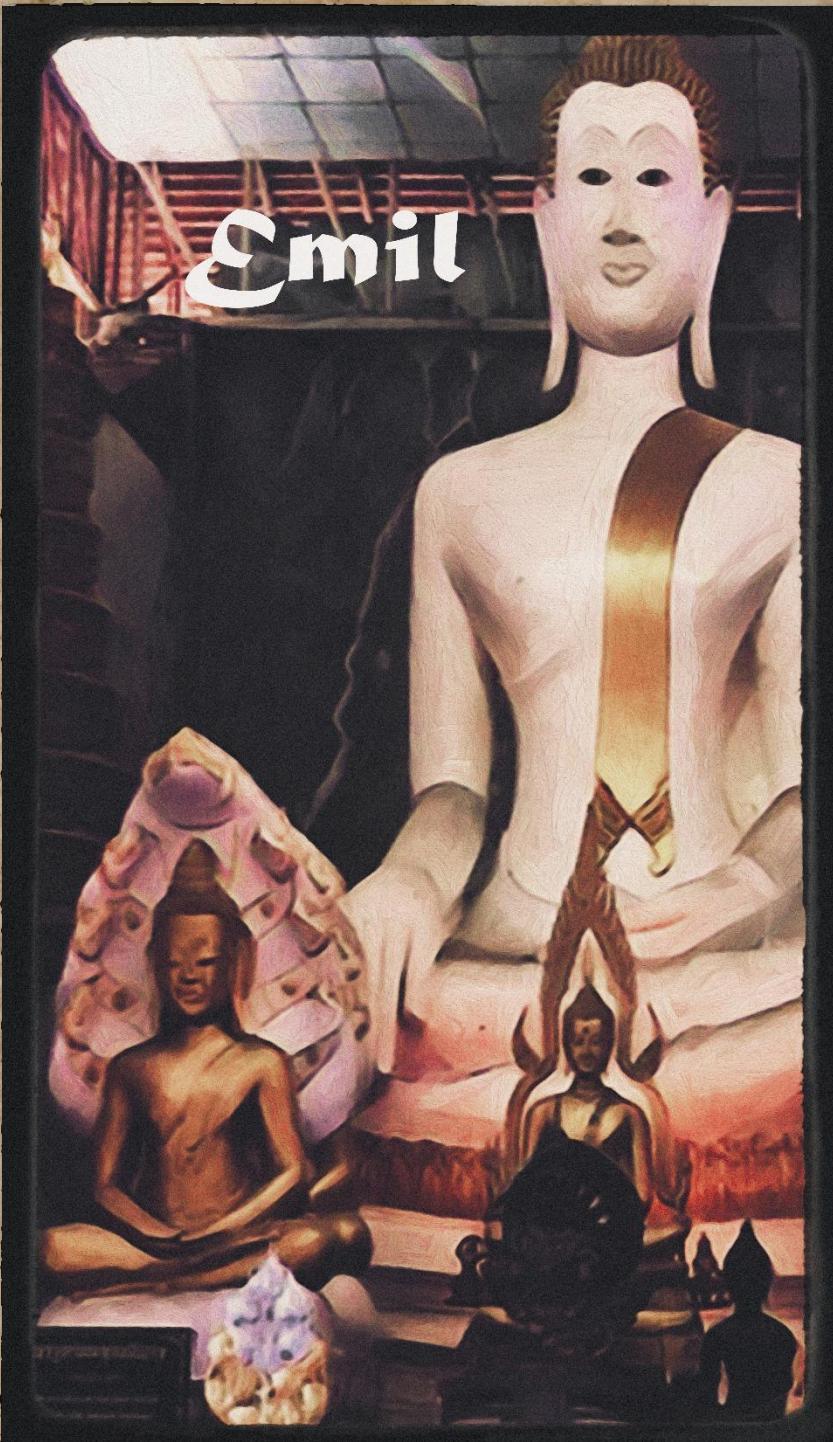
So to actually defeat Time takes only the will power to embrace the power of God's Will and let it release you from the chilly grip of Time's current hold upon your life.

- **From Professor Cha-Ananda**

The Grandfather of the Souvenir Merchant

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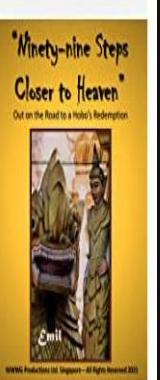
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About EMIL WEST

The new founder of The Revolutionary Cadre for Artistic Freedom. You too can become a part of the Revolutionary Cadre for Artistic Freedom to be able to afford a decent meal or pay the overdue water bill by buying my books...Indeed, you can Comrade Book Buyer!

Welcome to all fans (all five or so of

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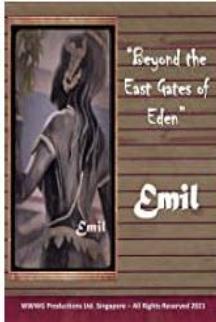


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"Out on the Hobo Tour"



Beyond the East Gates of Eden

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"Smoldering black smoke arose from every pile of rubble in what had once been the great Luciferian Capital and we ensured that none of made actual eye contact with the patrolling Heavenly Horde Militia as to not be stopped and harassed.

We passed through the wreckage to where we had set up camp and planned our escape from the encircling, victorious armies of Michael and his warrior clan.

They had won and we had been powerless to change the old Shaman's prophecy of us as the harbingers of the end of nearly a million years of the Luciferian Republic."

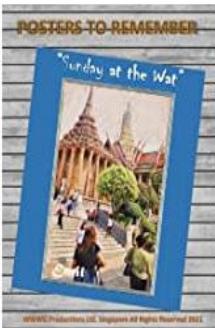
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"Lord Forgive Us! But, we do need to make some money!"

POSTER SALES?

We have rarely if ever done such a thing but, Mr. Charles (WWWG's Guru Accountant) has determined that with current books sales, we will need an additional fifty-five years to recoup what Emil owes us in advances and overages on his expense account on the Hobo Tours. So, Mr. Charles had the brilliant suggestion that we try to get Emil's few readers interested in Emil Posters and this edition was the collective creation of our Marketing Brain Trust & Mr. Charles..."

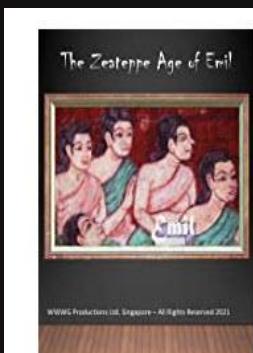
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"THERE WAS A TIME WHEN....We are still here even though the world about us changes and morphs into yet a stranger version of the Twilight Zone even as far away as here in Singapore.

American Politicos are seriously talking of the ways and means to intern their political opposition – all 75 million of them into internment camps, taking children away from descent parents to re-educate them into the wonders of the dawn of this GREAT SOCIAL RESET. I wish I was kidding or that this is a bad, direct-to-video Sci-Fi Movie instead of the lead story on both CNN and the BBC this morning..."

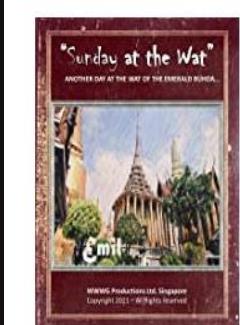
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Sunday at the Wat: ANOTHER DAY AT THE WAT OF THE EMERALD BUHDA
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“WELCOME BACK FRIENDS! Are you scratching your head and wondering why after all my complaining about Emil’s obsession with temples and the likes; why would I approve yet another temple-based book from Emil? I was too...believe me this was my good intention but, with the realities and circumstances of this dawn of the Brave New Social Reset, I had no better choice to make! Why?

Well...This is rather simple as Emil has been locked away on the Isle Of Penang for almost a year after the original 15-day lockdowns has turned into almost a year long internment and due to this simple fact, Emil has had to increasingly cannibalize the unused parts of his catalog.”

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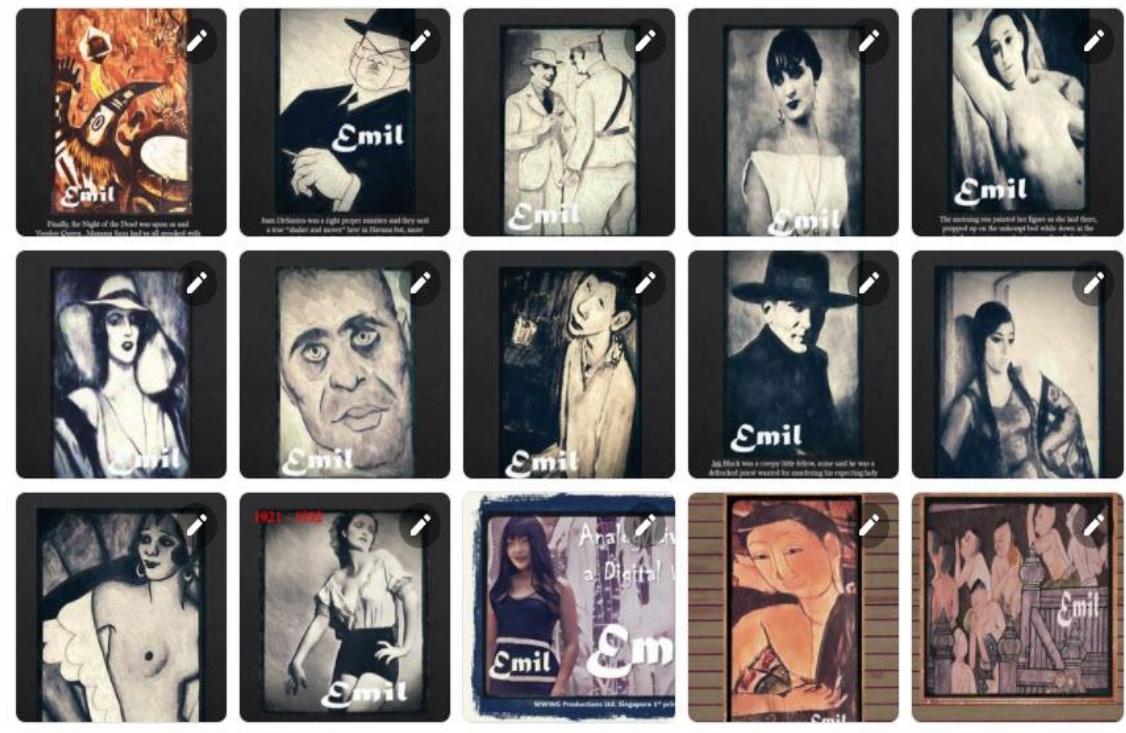
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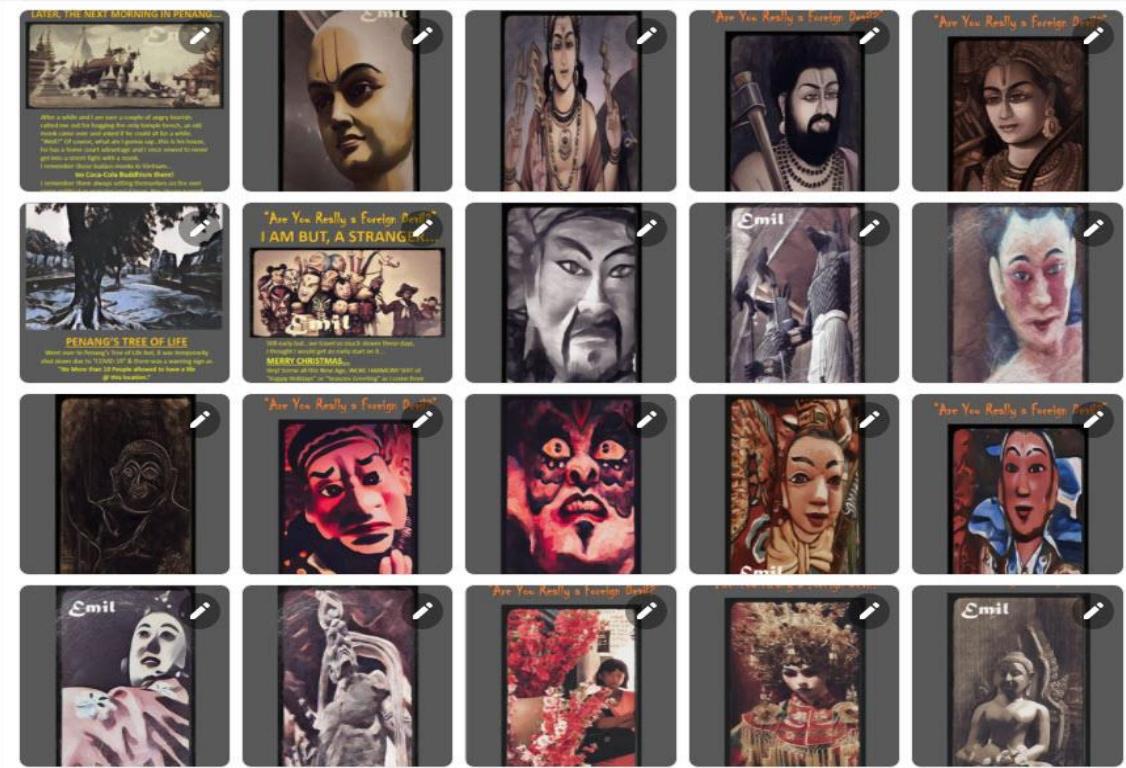


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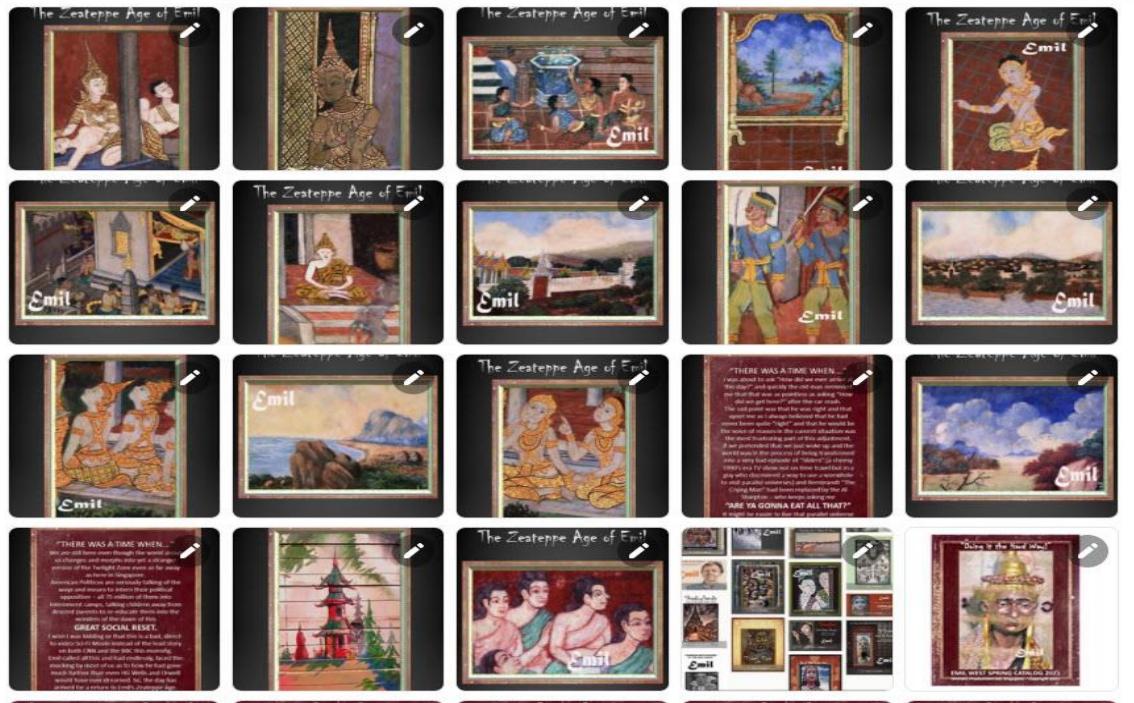
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